

“Real G’s” and Wannabes

Policy Implications of the Changing Juvenile Gang Dynamics
In Durham, North Carolina

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Abstract

Across the country, juvenile gang membership has increased in places which don't quite fit the mold of a conventional gang city. Durham, North Carolina is just such a place: a mid-sized city in the south with a tobacco manufacturing history and a reputation for good music. For the past couple decades, however, the city has also gained notoriety as a regional center of gang activity. Conventionally, the reason why juvenile gang membership concerns policymakers is crime, and typically rates of juvenile gang involvement are correlative to rates of juvenile crime. Yet what happens when these trends begin to diverge? This is the question that has been puzzling Durham policymakers since 2009: despite notable successes at reducing crime, juvenile gang membership has increased, raising a number of questions. If juvenile gang membership does not necessarily increase crime in a city, then should it still matter from a policy perspective? This thesis explores these recent developments in Durham and seeks to evaluate the ways in which juvenile gang membership should impact public safety policy.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Since 2009, a puzzling anomaly has emerged in Durham, NC. On one hand, violent crime rates have continued on a decades-long decline at both the state and local level¹. This trend is mirrored by statewide juvenile gang involvement, which decreased from 8.4% in 2009 to 6.1% in 2012². Given that gangs are criminal organizations by definition, the relationship between these two rates is unremarkable.

What is surprising is that within the same 2009-2012 timeframe, juvenile gang involvement in Durham has edged onto a different trajectory. Even as youth violent crime has generally continued to decline, juvenile gang involvement has risen from 17.5% in 2009 to 21% in 2012, reaching nearly four times the state average³.

For a county with a strong public service sector that includes multiple gang reduction initiatives, these numbers present several questions. Why are juvenile gang involvement rates in Durham so much higher than state averages? Why do these rates show a continued increase, despite a proliferation of gang reduction initiatives and declines in normally related trends, such as violent crime? More practically, what role *should* youth gang membership play in law enforcement strategies if its correlation with violent crime appears to be decreasing?

Research Objectives

This study seeks to address these queries within the context of a larger, policy-relevant question. **How should changes in juvenile gang membership inform local governments' public safety policy?**

In order to gain insight into this question, a wide range of qualitative and quantitative sources were utilized, including sixty interviews with relevant community stakeholders, police data, and a number of other sources⁴. Public policy analysis is based on either: (a) direct recommendation from interviewees, or (b) clear and logical discrepancies between stated gang reduction objectives and current policy.

Key Findings

Should the recent changes in juvenile gang membership inform public policy? When it comes to the quantified increase in juvenile gang involvement, the answer may be “not yet”. For one, the data collection method by which these numbers are obtained has multiple limitations which shed uncertainty on any minor fluctuations in the data. Furthermore, law enforcement officers and court counselors interviewed for this study noted that juvenile gang membership rates often experiences minor cyclical waves simply as gangs phase in or out of “style” for youth. Rates are additionally influenced by changes in Durham’s approach towards gangs, for example when a particular gang reduction program is initiated or terminated, or when there is a disruption in the identification process.

¹ Johnson 2011

² Needs Assessment Data from the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN)

³ Needs Assessment Data from NC-JOIN

⁴ See Sources section on page 60 for a list of all data sources.

The number of potentially influential external factors creates a distinct possibility that the recent increase may be the product of data flaws rather than actual change in membership levels. Thus while it is important to continue to monitor juvenile gang membership statistics in the event that the increase continues and proves to be significant, greater attention should be given to qualitative changes in Durham's juvenile gang dynamics, which have more immediate bearing on gang reduction efforts.

Durham currently has many of the key ingredients for successful gang reduction. The city and county governments share a robust, three-pronged gang membership strategy which includes preventative, interventional, and suppressive initiatives. A strong public service and nonprofit sector offer the manpower and expertise to provide critical services to gang-involved youth, and the city enjoys a growing reservoir of resources as economic revitalization attracts entrepreneurs and visitors from the surrounding region. However, in order for these ingredients to lead to successful gang reduction measures, they must be informed by a more thorough understanding of the current reality of juvenile gang membership dynamics in Durham.

Qualitative changes in juvenile gang composition and demographics

A number of changes were observed in the composition and dynamics of juvenile gangs in Durham. These changes are summarized here; substantiating evidence may be found in body of the thesis.

First, a number of court counselors reported observing a **broadening base** of children who are entering the juvenile justice system with gang membership or association. This broadening base includes more girls, more children who come from middle class backgrounds, a greater number of younger children, and more Hispanic gang members. Overall, this reflects a degree of gang normalization (described in detail in the body of the thesis), though additional external factors influence the latter two groups.

Changes in **internal gang dynamics** also appear to have impacted juvenile gang involvement. Several sources indicate that over the past few years, some of the larger gangs in Durham have grown less cohesive, with weaker and more diffuse leadership and a resulting weakening of gang rule enforcement. While there is no conclusive evidence of the causes of this decreased cohesiveness, some reports indicate a “splintering” within larger sets. Such a state of relaxed gang rule enforcement may have a cyclical relationship with overall juvenile gang involvement. Lower enforcement of gang rules reduces the cost of associating with (or claiming to associate with) a gang, which allows for a broader and more diffuse base of associates, which in turn reduces the probability that children who claim gang association will be singled out to receive repercussions from the gang.

A second, widely reported trend among juvenile gang members was an increasing tendency to hide or minimize **visible signs of gang membership** or association. Blatant identifiers such as full colors, obvious flagging (ex: flag hanging out of a pocket), or large tattoos appear to be largely replaced by more subtle markers. These include colored rosaries, eyebrow slashes, and smaller traces of color, such as a clothing detail, pattern, or lining.

Third, there may be an increased recognition within gangs of the **strategic value of recruiting younger gang members** for the purpose of committing crimes. Consequences for juveniles who are caught committing a crime are far more lenient than consequences for older members. This is truer now

than it has been in the past, as juvenile justice policy has recently moved towards treatment-based rather than purely punitive consequences for delinquency.

One positive change reported in this research was a **reduced visible impact of gangs on schools**. Information from Durham Public Schools staff and School Resource Officers (SROs) indicate that visible gang activity in schools has decreased over the past five years. Reasons for this are unclear and may be partially impacted by the movement towards more subtle gang identifiers, noted above. However, this does have promising implications in terms of reduced impact on the overall school-aged population in Durham.

How should recent changes in juvenile gang membership inform policy in the future?

Durham currently employs a comprehensive three-pronged model for gang reduction that includes initiatives for prevention, intervention, and suppression. For purposes of convenience and utility, policy implications are organized within this framework, with “identification” added as a supplementary category since it has repercussions for all three prongs of the overall gang reduction strategy.

Identification

An effective gang involvement **identification** process within the juvenile justice system is critical so that counselors may (a) target resources and intervention services effectively, and (b) communicate useful information about gang involvement to service providers or other counselors if needed. However, the current metric used to measure gang involvement is too general to be useful, and subject to a wide range of external influences. These include environmental variables such as the presence of visible gang posters at the interview site where youth are asked about their gang involvement.

Prevention

The broadening base of gang membership indicates a need for broader, earlier, and more inclusive gang **prevention education**. The GREAT program is currently the only county-wide educational initiative that directly addresses gang involvement. However, this program has been shown since 2004 to have no impact on gang membership, albeit modest positive effects on police-civilian relations⁵. Re-evaluating current gang-specific prevention educational initiatives is essential.

For preventative education to be successful, however, there is also a need to address **gang normalization** in Durham and the existence of a subculture in which Durham’s reputation as a “gang city” sets a standard for young people. This is a difficult and complex issue, and one which this study does not presume to have solutions for. However, an overwhelming sentiment expressed in interviews was that gang membership has been largely been ignored by local politicians and policymakers, to a degree that is detrimental to the success of gang reduction initiatives. There may be valid reasons for reducing the level of public conversation about gangs (for example, to improve perceptions of public safety). However, there is a strong need for community-wide dialogue or a formal town hall meeting which seeks to strike an agreed-upon balance between transparency with regards to the county’s gang issues, and reducing a reputation which may encourage gang membership in the first place.

⁵ Ashcroft 2004

Intervention

A critical gap in intervention services is the existence of an **exit option** for gang-involved youth which does not hinge on arrest or court involvement. While youth are widely informed that gangs will be detrimental to their well-being through gang posters, the GREAT program, and other means, there are few visible mechanisms to facilitate actually leaving a gang. The nonprofit Project BUILD is a well-established initiative which provides exit assistance and alternatives to gang involvement. However, two factors limit this program's ability to access the larger population of gang-involved youth. First, the intensive nature of its services inherently limits its capacity to serve large numbers without a massive increase in resources and staff. Second, Project BUILD relies on referrals to obtain its clients, the vast majority of which come from juvenile court. There is no city-or county-wide system in place to facilitate leaving a gang for children who have not become court-involved, or even to provide basic physical safety against retribution from the gang such as "beating out". A well-known, county-wide exit contingency plan has potential to provide a low-cost and more widely accessible way for youth to exit gangs if they choose. Elements of such a plan are described in greater detail in the body of the thesis.

Suppression

Inconsistency in gang reduction initiatives was a problem found to pervade prevention, intervention and suppression initiatives in Durham. However, this inconsistency was most obvious and impactful within law enforcement, which has fluctuated in its use of gang-specific units and gang intelligence systems. A number of interviewees noted that this consistency is central to success both for people who are executing an initiative (who gain greater familiarity with the program and are thus more effectively able to implement it) and for the gang-involved youth (who will not seriously engage with programs that they do not believe will be around for the long term.) Politics and fluctuations in funding pose difficult barriers to obtaining such consistency; however, prioritizing consistency as a principle in gang reduction policy is critical for strategic success. Collaborative bodies such as the Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee (GRSSC) may provide a useful mechanism for holding the city and county accountable to this principle.

Road Map

The following pages seek to thoroughly explain how changes in juvenile gang membership should inform policy by providing a more thorough background and walking the reader through evidence obtained in this study. The theoretical framework section will explore existing literature related to juvenile gangs and gang reduction methods. It will also provide working definitions for a number of terms that will recur throughout the thesis. The background section will then present pertinent information about Durham, North Carolina, which is the central case of this study. The remainder of the paper will then move into the study itself. The methodology section will outline the processes used for data collection and analysis, including the logical process from which policy implications were derived. In the results section, research findings will be presented and organized in answer to several key sub-inquiries which build towards the primary question: how should changes in juvenile gang membership inform local governments' public safety policy? First, how significant are recent trends in reported juvenile gang involvement rates? Second, how does juvenile gang membership impact public safety? Third, what qualitative changes have occurred in recent years, and ultimately how do these changes inform policy? Finally, the conclusion will seek to synthesize ideas and discuss the broader significance of these findings.

Theoretical Framework

Definitions

Gang: North Carolina law⁶ describes a street gang as “any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, that: (1) has as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more **felony offenses**, or delinquent acts that would be felonies if committed by an adult; (2) has three or more members individually or collectively engaged in, or who have engaged in, criminal street gang activity; and (3) may have a common name, common identifying sign or symbol.” This definition is a simplified version of the Department of Justice’s definition, which additionally captures a range of required and possible features of gangs, such as territory, protection for members, and recruiting activities. A hierarchy of terms is used to refer to smaller, operational groups within a larger named gang. “**Set**” refers to a specific local group, typically with its own leader. “**Cliques**” or “**crews**” refer to smaller subgroups, often organized within a specific neighborhood.

Juvenile: In the North Carolina court system, a juvenile is defined as an individual below the age of sixteen. If an offense is committed after a child’s sixteenth birthday, he or she will be tried in adult court, where consequences for that offense are typically more stringent. However, children as young as thirteen may be processed as adults for certain serious offenses. In the course of this paper, “juvenile” will be used to refer specifically to a youth who has become involved in the juvenile court system⁷.

Gang member: A gang member is an individual who is part of a gang and has undergone some formal induction process. Obtaining membership usually requires that the individual be “beat in”, often following a period of “putting in work”, or committing acts intended to demonstrate commitment to the gang and gang lifestyle.

Gang associate: This term refers to any individual with some specific and meaningful connection to a gang. According to the North Carolina standardized gang identification criteria checklist, an individual need meet only one of twelve criteria to fall into this category.⁸ In practice, this term is highly general, and envelopes a wide range of involvement levels, from individuals who are actively seeking membership status, to those who merely live in a gang-dense neighborhood.

Gang-Involved: Rates of gang involvement cited in this study are drawn from the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice’s Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN) database. In this database, “gang members” and “gang associates” are lumped together to obtain total involvement levels for each county. The expression “gang-involved” will therefore be used in this thesis as a blanket term to encompass both gang members and gang associates.

Delinquency and Crime: A crime is an act which violates current law. A delinquent act is an act committed by a juvenile which would be considered a crime if committed by an adult. Because this is a somewhat technical delineation, and because some readers may not be grounded in the meaning of

⁶ GS 14-50.16(b)

⁷ See appendix B2 for a flowchart of the North Carolina juvenile justice process.

⁸ See Appendix B1 for a full list of gang identification criteria.

“delinquency”, the term “crime” will be frequently used to refer to acts perpetrated by juveniles, although this does not strictly adhere to proper legal jargon.

Gang activity: For the purposes of this thesis, gang activity will refer to acts which fall under the broad Department of Justice definition of a gang; these acts include criminal offenses as well as recruiting, intimidation, tagging or graffiti. Note that this definition is somewhat narrow; in a broader sense gang activity could include more positive actions such as providing protection for members, meeting regularly, socializing, etc. However, because these positive actions do not impact public safety policymaking, “gang activity” here will refer only to those acts which are of concern to policymakers.

Gang identifiers: “Gang identifiers” refers to visual markers used by gang members to demonstrate their involvement in a particular gang or set. Typical identifiers include clothing or accessories of a particular color or that favor either the right or left side of the body, tattoos or branding, certain haircuts or eyebrow “slashes”, rosaries, any representation of certain numbers (especially five, six, thirteen, or fourteen), and others. A range of non-visual markers may also be used to detect gang involvement, including jargon.

Literature Review

Gangs have captivated the attention of academics and the American public for decades, and consequentially there is an immense volume of research conducted on the topic. This section draws together relevant literature to provide a baseline of information concerning juvenile gang membership and recent research developments relevant to this study.

Juvenile Gang Membership: Why Care?

If you ask a law enforcement officer or city councilperson why they care about youth gangs, there’s a strong likelihood that their answers will be variations on a single word: “crime”. Indeed, the synonymy embedded in the media between the words “gang” and “crime” makes this statement so unsurprising as to be almost mundane. Criminal activity is part of the very definition of a gang, the primary feature which separates it from other social groups. Determining how best to suppress this activity is a key challenge for law enforcement agencies seeking to fulfill their fundamental duty to preserve public safety.

A key first step in addressing any problem is to define it. This is particularly true in the case of gang activity, which tends to inspire either paranoia (leading to selective or excessive enforcement) or denial (leading to under-enforcement) within affected communities⁹. Establishing a baseline definition introduces some continuity and accountability across jurisdictions, although it inevitably fails to fully capture the diverse array of existing gangs. “Gang” is a blanket term which encompasses a wide range of groups with varying interests, degrees of organization, and geographical ranges. Gangs in the U.S. are typically placed in one of four primary categories: street gangs, prison gangs, Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMGs), and neighborhood or local gangs¹⁰. Within the context of youth gang membership, street gangs and neighborhood gangs are the primary concern; while OMGs and prison gangs often have peripherally

⁹ Bobrowski 1988

¹⁰ National Gang Intelligence Center 2011

involved juvenile-aged youth, they play a far less central role since they do not typically possess the resources for involvement in the OMG, and are very rarely placed in adult prisons.

The Department of Justice definition, a version of which is adopted in most states, describes a gang as “An association of three or more individuals whose members collectively identify themselves by adopting a group identity, which they use to create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation... Whose purpose in part is to engage in criminal activity and which uses violence or intimidation to further its criminal objectives, [and] whose members engage in criminal activity or acts of juvenile delinquency... with the intent to enhance or preserve the association’s power, reputation, or economic resources.” The definition also incorporates elements of group symbols or identifiers, as well as several characteristics which “may” apply, such as physical protection of members and control over a geographic territory¹¹.

A noteworthy addition to the definition of *youth* gang is that this must be a group which consists, in the words of the National Gang Center, of “youths or young adults [the responding community agency is] *willing* to identify as a ‘gang’”¹². The leeway that this classification leaves for subjective interpretation highlights the extreme difficulty of gaining a consistent set of gang membership data. Few controls exist for collecting and processing gang identification information, and studies of national gang databases indicate that the resulting inconsistencies yield an overall picture which is rife with “highly subjective” and “often erroneous” documentation¹³. Indeed, even the standard for deciding who is classified as a “youth” is not universally agreed upon: though forty-eight states place all individuals under the age of eighteen into this category, New York and North Carolina treat individuals as adults under the law from the age of sixteen¹⁴. With limited time, resources, and manpower, jurisdictions must necessarily choose to prioritize certain crime reduction strategies and interventions. While in some cases, this will include a targeted focus on gangs, in others gang membership might be deemed more peripheral to law enforcement strategies.

Youth in Gangs

In the broad scheme of things, juvenile-aged youth do not make up a large proportion of the overall gang population. For example, in North Carolina, youth under 16 years of age (the legal cutoff for youth to be considered juveniles in the court system) make up 2% of the overall gang population, while youth 17 and under make up 10% of the total¹⁵. Yet the issue of youth in gangs is far from negligible, particularly in the light of findings from the 2011 FBI National Gang Threat Assessment, which noted that “Many jurisdictions are experiencing an increase in juvenile gangs and violence¹⁶.” Some researchers and anecdotal evidence report that gangs are getting younger, though in other jurisdictions there appears to be an overall ageing of the gang population¹⁷. The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention notes that reports of “ageing” gang populations should be treated with caution, since smaller jurisdictions are more likely to underreport, and tend to have gang populations which are proportionally

¹¹ Department of Justice

¹² National Gang Center 2013, emphasis added

¹³ Wright 2006, 115-116

¹⁴ National Institute of Justice 2011

¹⁵ Governor’s Crime Commission 2011, 4-8

¹⁶ National Gang Intelligence Center 2011, 18

¹⁷ Mays 2012; Egley 2006

much younger¹⁸. Older members are found particularly in “cities that have developed gang traditions over a decade or more.”¹⁹

For the large number of jurisdictions which are experiencing such an increase in youth membership, the FBI National Gang Threat Assessment report goes on to identify a number of causes, including “the increased incarceration rates of older members and aggressive recruitment of juveniles in schools... because of their vulnerability and susceptibility to recruitment tactics, as well as their likelihood of avoiding harsh criminal sentencing and willingness to engage in violence.”²⁰ The role that schools play as in gang recruitment and organization is a particularly important piece of the puzzle, as schools are the axis about which most juvenile-aged youths’ social lives shift. A strong illustration of this fact is the increasing interchangeability of the word “clique” for “small gang” by youths themselves²¹. Though functionally the same, the word “clique” has less of a traditional association with crime. Rather, it is connotative of the types of social groupings which occur in virtually every grade school, and which frequently include similar elements of exclusivity and rivalry that gangs are known for.²² This semantic blurring of the line between “gangs” and more typical youth social groups leads to the question whether local stakeholders should continue to approach gangs in the same manner, as threats to public safety rather than social groups.

The term “gang” has power such that in public dialogue, “youth gang member” is virtually synonymous with “delinquent youth” or “juvenile”, though certainly they are separate categories. Nevertheless, a number of studies have indicated that gang membership does play a significant role in elevating the likelihood of youths to become involved in crime. One widely cited study is the Rochester Youth Development Survey, which followed the social and criminal activity of a number of youths over time. Among other comparisons, the study examined the difference in crime rates and changes in these crime rates between youth who were gang members, youth whose close friends were considered delinquent, and youth who did not associate with delinquent peers. The results were clear: for virtually every type of crime examined, those youth who were gang members had become increasingly involved in criminal activity, and committed crimes at a higher rate than even those whose close friends were considered “delinquent.”²³ Delinquency in turn has dramatic effects on a youth’s ability to be successful in the long term: court involvement makes youth more likely to be negatively profiled in school and at home, and increases their likelihood of committing other crimes in the future²⁴.

Gang Interventions and Gang Policy

A common strategy of law enforcement and policymakers is to bundle crime and gang membership, seeking to address one issue by tackling the other. Often times, targeting gangs as a means of reducing overall crime rates appeals to law enforcement as an efficient crime reduction strategy, allowing them to focus on a smaller, more “high-crime” group rather than the more diffuse crimes which may occur throughout a city. This strategy becomes doubly appealing in cities which have a high

¹⁸ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1996

¹⁹ Klein 1997, 43

²⁰ National Gang Intelligence Center 2011, 18

²¹ Martinez 2009

²² Adler 1998

²³ Thornberry 2004

²⁴ Bernburg et al 2006

prevalence of neighborhood gangs, since a key feature of such groups is their attachment to a defined geographic territory. As a result, a large number of public agencies have incorporated into part of their overall public safety strategy a variety of gang intervention and prevention programs. The function of these programs varies enormously, from after school activities coordination, to legal support, to outreach to those who youth who have already come into contact with the juvenile court system. The effectiveness of these interventions is debated, however; while suppression tactics (utilizing a tough law enforcement approach) are able to reduce crime rates, strategies aimed at reducing gang membership through preventative or intervening action have met with very little success.

Why is it so difficult for policymakers to directly reduce gang membership? First, the dynamic nature of many youth gangs means that there is a constant information deficit for policymakers and law enforcement²⁵. However, the more fundamental difficulty which policymakers face is grounded in the reasons *why* youths join gangs in the first place. The “aggressive recruitment of juveniles” cited earlier from the FBI’s National Gang Threat Assessment is one concern, though if gang membership was entirely the result of coercion, then the gang population would be dramatically smaller. Instead, gangs appeal to youths for a number of reasons: the prospect of greater social acceptance, order and respect; as a way to make money, as a means of protection. In some regions, rivalry over “territory” or “turf” between neighborhood gangs and the danger of violating another gangs’ boundaries even accidentally might compel youth to join a gang as a means of survival²⁶. In other cases, joining a gang is seen as a source of excitement, thrill, and power; a sentiment derived largely from the glorification of gangs and gang culture in popular music and film (consider, for example, Kanye West’s recent hit “My Clique” or Jay Z’s “American Gangster”). In still other cases, particularly in communities which experience a higher concentration of gang membership (often neighborhoods which are largely ethnically homogenous and which have fewer resources), an important consideration is the type of role models who live in the area. In those cities where gangs have an older presence, children may often have siblings, older youth, parents, and even grandparents who were gang-involved, which creates a precedent from early on regarding gang membership, even if that role model does not endorse gang membership. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that Durham may be just such a case: for example, an article recently published in *The Durham Voice* described the struggle of local authorities to suppress “third-generation gang membership”, with youth following in the footsteps of numerous parents, cousins, and others²⁷.

The takeaway of this examination of motivations for joining a gang is that causes for gang membership are highly diverse; thus there is no “one size fits all” intervention for youth gang membership. A variety of policies which have attempted to reconnect gang members to the community as groups of “disconnected youth” have met with very little success²⁸. According to gang scholar Malcolm Klein, a number of gang intervention strategies which seek to reach out to gangs as groups may, in fact, *boost* their productivity by increasing the level of cohesiveness within the gang. Reasoning that groups which are better organized are likely to be more productive (the “product” in this case being crime), Klein sought to test this “group cohesiveness” model through a study in which he and his colleagues undertook an intensive 18-month gang intervention program. This program was designed to break down the fabric of the gang as a group, by providing alternative *individual* opportunities and a source of income. The success

²⁵ Klein 1997

²⁶ NPR 2013

²⁷ Owens 2013

²⁸ Dodson 2008

of the program was astounding: metrics of gang cohesiveness declined by 40% and corresponded to a similar decrease in the total crime committed by the gang²⁹. However, the intensiveness of this program and requirement of individual focus on each gang member limits the feasibility of scaling it up.

A somewhat different program worth examining is the “Operation Ceasefire” intervention strategy engineered by criminologist David Kennedy in Boston. Though its primary goal was to end gun violence rather than to decrease gang membership, the program was enormously successful at reducing crime rates by *using* the interactions between gang members as a way to hold large numbers of youths accountable to their actions. Essentially, a community chooses to tackle a specific type of crime such as gun violence, and then invites individual gang members to a “call-in”. At the call-in, a group of city authorities, law enforcement, family members, mentors, etc, inform the individual (a) that they are valuable to the community, and (b) that there is a case prepared against them, which will be activated if they *or any other member of their gang* is caught doing the specific crime that the initiative was focused on preventing³⁰.

All of these difficulties underline the critical question which law enforcement and policymakers must ask when designing crime reduction strategies: Should law enforcement treat a gang as a group entity, and thereby risk giving them an additional source of legitimacy with which to operate? Should they consider only some gangs worthy of gang-specific targeting, and if so what is the switch point at which a group becomes worthy of this sort of targeting? Or should police ignore gang membership entirely, and focus exclusively on crime itself? In order to create effective gang reduction policy, these questions must be targeted and answered at a local level. Gangs are immensely diverse, and each city or county has different social, economic, geographic, and other factors which will impact the manner in which its gangs operate.

As local officials report a diminishing correlation between rates of juvenile gang membership and key indicators such as violent crime, there is a strong need for research which will assess the validity of current gang membership data, investigate changes in gang culture or demographics, and, given this information, to seek a more thorough understanding of how these changes might affect gang policy.

Background

Durham, North Carolina

Located in the central region of North Carolina, Durham County is a mid-sized city with a manufacturing past and relatively ethnically diverse population. Over the past several years, the Durham metropolitan area has undergone significant economic development, in part by cultivating a strong arts and culture scene which has made the city a popular destination for entrepreneurs. The increased revenue to the county through ventures such as the Durham Performing Arts Center (ranked the 4th most popular performing arts venue in the U.S. in 2012) has translated into a number of proactive public programs,

²⁹ Klein 2004

³⁰ Kennedy 2009

including downtown renovations and revitalization of public parks³¹. Yet a major source of tension amid these changes is the degree to which these benefits are (or are not) distributed across the population. In particular, there has been widely cited concern that increased development of the downtown has accelerated a process of gentrification of the city³². These tensions are partly fueled by Durham's complicated history with race: the city has long retained distinct, ethnically homogenous neighborhoods, often with sharp geographic boundaries³³. In more recent history, this has translated into diverging demographics of the city of Durham relative to Durham County, with the county growing increasingly white while the city retained a higher concentration of the county's African-American population. A newer element emerging into these spatial dynamics is the county's Latino population, which has grown from 1% in 1990 to 13.5% in 2012³⁴.

A Brief History of Gangs in Durham

Low-level organized crime has been present in Durham at least since the 70's, when Jamaican groups "brought the gang structure" to Durham to support drug trading operations³⁵. The city's strategic placement at the intersection of the North Carolina railroad and key major highways appear to have made the city a valuable transition point for East Coast drug traffic between cities such as Miami, New York, and Baltimore. As a result, Durham developed an underground reputation in the late 70's and 80's as "the cutting board"³⁶ for various drugs, as well as a regional hotspot for heroin trade³⁷. According to multiple sources, the first named gangs began to emerge in the 80's in the form of neighborhood-associated groups such as the "Few Crew", named after a public housing project in East Durham³⁸. In the late 80's and 90's, the number of gangs began to expand and include sets of national gangs such as Crips and Bloods (although these sets appear to have been homegrown rather than significantly linked to national organizations).

This increase in gang activity echoed trends³⁹ in cities across the nation at the time, although their expansion in Durham was likely exacerbated by tobacco factory closures and resulting layoffs⁴⁰. With such high unemployment, gangs offered an alternative source of income through drug trade. Gangs continue to have a strong presence in Durham today, often with some loose ties to a certain neighborhood. Partially due to these neighborhood or geographic ties, it is not unheard of that a young person who moves with his or her family to a different part of the city will switch gangs for social or self-defense reasons⁴¹. The Blood gang is and has been for years the largest umbrella gang organization in Durham, although it is divided into a number of smaller sets which have stronger geographic ties. The explosion of the Hispanic population in Durham since the 1990's has greatly expanded the presence of gangs such as

³¹ Gardner 2012

³² Durham Coalition for Urban Justice 2012

³³ Brown 2009

³⁴ City of Durham 2009; U.S. Census Bureau 2012

³⁵ Interview with Paul Martin

³⁶ Interview with Marcia Owen and "J"; Interview with Paul Martin

³⁷ Paul Martin. According to a substance abuse counselor at the Criminal Justice Resource Center, Durham continues to fill a similar role in East Coast drug trade, partially due to a reputation for quality drugs.

³⁸ Interviews with anonymous former Parks and Recreation employee, Joe Costa, Raheem Aleem, Jim Stuit

³⁹ Miller 2001, 2

⁴⁰ PBS. "North Carolina & Tobacco: A Timeline"

⁴¹ Interviews with Stephanie Green, Tonya Griffis, Durham juvenile court counselor; Joe Costa, Durham County Sheriff

the Norteños, Sureños, MS-13, and Latin Kings, though these gangs continue to be less well understood by law enforcement and other stakeholders.

Gang Policy in Durham

While law enforcement became aware of gangs relatively early on, formal efforts to reduce gang presence in Durham did not begin until the 2000's. An earlier patchwork of gang reduction programs in the 90's may have inadvertently contributed to the problem. For example, one former parks and recreation employee describes operating a sports league called the Mayor's Youth ACTION (Agencies Coming Together Improving Our Neighborhoods) League for youth living in Durham's housing projects. The program was run in partnership with the police, health department, and other agencies, and incorporated a number of life skills workshops. Teams were neighborhood-based and would compete against rivals from other neighborhoods. At the time, it appeared to be beneficial, giving kids "opportunities, something to do with their time... [and] it kind of allowed a truce, it allowed them to go into other communities without fear of being attacked."⁴² However, the program closed after a few years due to inconsistent funding, and as a result participants "were organized, they were used to hanging with each other, and now with nothing to do." This interviewee noted that in this case, programming may have contributed to juvenile gang cohesiveness, a finding backed by researcher Malcolm Klein, as described in the "theoretical framework" section.

By the end of the 90's, there was growing public pressure to implement more gang reduction programs. In 2000, Durham became the first city in the region to establish a gang unit on its police force⁴³, which remained the primary gang reduction initiative until the mid-2000's, when funding became increasingly available for more preventative and interventional gang reduction programs. One such program was the North Carolina Child Response Initiative, a community policing partnership that provided trauma counseling for children exposed to violence, maintaining a particular focus on siblings or children of gang members until its termination in mid-2013 due to funding cuts⁴⁴. In 2007, Durham commissioned its first Comprehensive Gang Assessment, which sought to provide a thorough overview of gangs in Durham and provide recommendations for their minimization. One of the results of this

Timeline: Gang Reduction Programs in Durham since 2000	
2000	– Gang Unit is established (DRAGON)
2005	– North Carolina Child Response Initiative (NCCRI) established with funds from Governor's Crime Commission
2007	– Comprehensive Gang Assessment – GREAT Program begins implementation in Durham Public Schools
2008	– Durham is awarded the Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative (CAGI) grant
2008-2009	– Police use GANGNet database – Police dissolve DRAGON gang unit
2009	– Project BUILD is established – Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee (GRSSC) is established – Project Safe Neighborhoods is established
2010	– CAGI grant terminates; GangNet phases out
2012	– Police and Sheriffs begin VIRT (Violent Incident Response Team)
2013:	– NCCRI stops due to cuts in funding – May be restoring GangNet in line with rec. from the Governor's Crime Commission

Table 1: Gang Reduction Programs in Durham since 2000

⁴² Interview with anonymous former Parks and Recreation employee

⁴³ Loveland 2000

⁴⁴ Bjurstrom 2009; Clay 2013

assessment was the revelation that the gang unit was ineffective, leading to its dissolution the following year. Another outcome of this assessment was the start of Project BUILD, a nonprofit which continues to be the primary gang-specific intervention program in the county. In 2008 Durham and Wake Counties were co-recipients for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)'s \$2.5 million Comprehensive Anti-Gang Initiative (CAGI) grant. Money from this grant was filtered into numerous programs, including Project BUILD and the establishment of the Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee and Project Safe Neighborhoods (a community policing initiative) in 2009. Durham Police also used funds to subscribe to the GangNet database, a widely-used system that allows police to easily add, access, and share information about gangs and gang-involved persons. However, use of this program declined and was eventually terminated in 2010 when the CAGI grant was not renewed. From 2010 to 2012 there was a lull in programming as less funding was immediately available; however, over the past year and a half focus on gang programming has begun to expand again on a smaller scale. The Durham Police Department's recently-formed Violent Incident Response Team⁴⁵ is a small unit which deals primarily with gang crime. Discussion has also resumed in 2013 regarding the revamping of the Gangnet database following a recommendation from the Governor's Crime Commission.

Juvenile Gang Involvement Data

In Durham, juvenile gang membership data is collected primarily by two parties. First, law enforcement agencies include gang membership information in their intelligence databases. Second, the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ) reports "gang membership or association" on the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN) for every child that goes through its system. This study focused on NC-JOIN data for two primary reasons. First, court counselors have an ongoing relationship with their clients, and as part of their job will build rapport with juveniles and conduct home visits. Thus they have a more thorough grasp on each juvenile's life and are in a better position to determine a child's gang membership status than a law enforcement officer, whose contact with the juvenile is more limited and may occur in tense circumstances. Second, NC-JOIN is the database most often cited by county policymaking entities as an informational source for its decision-making process, and thus is more broadly policy-relevant.

⁴⁵ ABC Local 2012

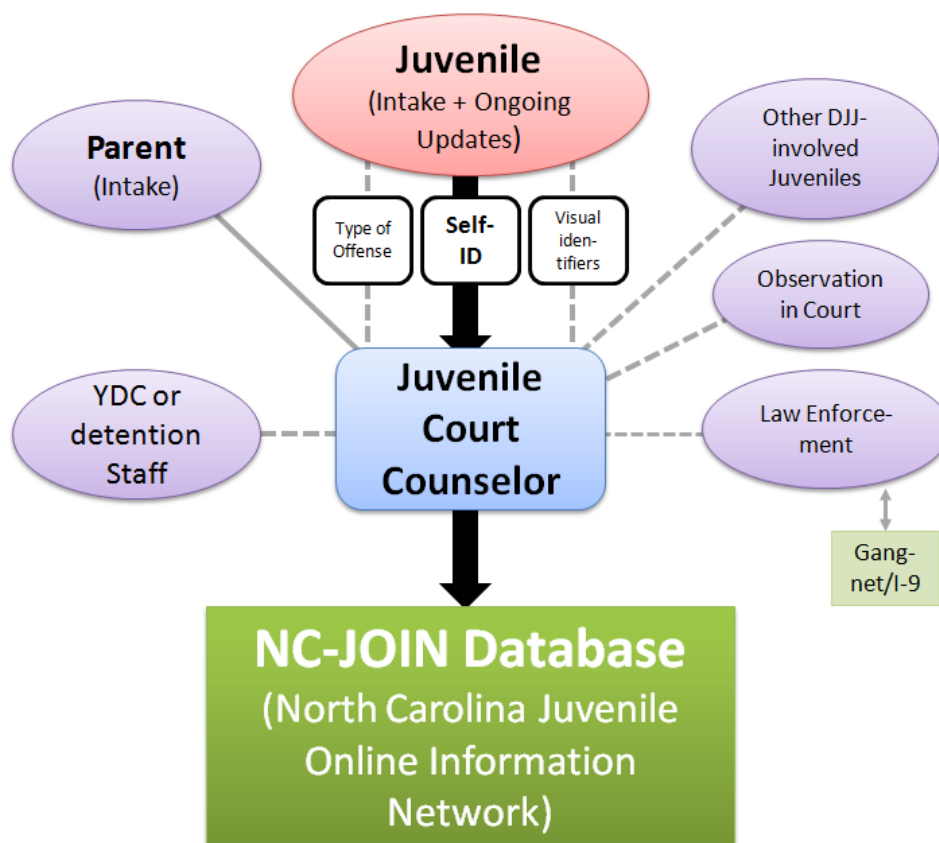


Figure 1: Juvenile gang involvement identification process and entry into the NC-JOIN database. Bold arrows indicate the primary means of data collection; solid gray lines indicate secondary data sources, which involve a formalized mechanism for data collection (ie, a parent or guardian is always required to attend the child’s intake interview and may contribute knowledge of their child’s gang involvement); dotted lines indicate informal and irregular information sources.

The primary source for juvenile gang membership information in the NC-JOIN database is self-identification. This self-identification may occur during a child’s intake interview upon entering the juvenile justice system, or in subsequent meetings with their court counselor⁴⁶. A counselor only definitively counts a child as gang-involved (i.e., checking “Yes” under the category “Gang Member or Associate”) if they *self-* identify as such.

Durham Gangs in a Broader Context

Durham’s demographics and history of gang activity are not unique, and Table 2 reveals a number of counties in North Carolina that have roughly similar population demographics and central city sizes, in particular Forsyth, Cumberland, and Guilford Counties. Yet despite these parallels, Durham’s rates of self-identified juvenile gang members are much higher than these other counties, as illustrated in Table 3. This begs the question, why is Durham different?

⁴⁶ Data in NC-JOIN comes from two assessments, stored as separate data sets. The first assessment is a “Risk Assessment”, based only on the initial intake interview. The second is a “Needs Assessment”, which is updated as court counselors continues to work with a child. Because of this difference, Needs Assessments tend to provide slightly higher, but more accurate, data regarding juvenile gang membership, since as counselors work more with a client, they build rapport with the child and develop greater knowledge of his or her life. Therefore the NC-JOIN numbers referred to in this study are based on the Needs Assessment data.

In order to examine whether there are factors unique to Durham which may contribute to high juvenile gang involvement rates, this study compared Durham's identification and intervention processes with those employed in other counties. Forsyth, Cumberland, and Guilford Counties, were the primary choices for comparison, as they share a number of demographic similarities with Durham. Information regarding Mecklenburg and Wake counties is provided below for additional context, as these counties contain the state's two largest metropolitan areas, Charlotte and Raleigh.

County	Prison population ₁				Delinquent rate/1000 (ages 6-15) ₂	Court-involved youth who self identified as gang members ⁴⁷
	Total	% WH	%BL	%HI		
Durham	1320	9.3	82.7	8.0	26.84	21%
Cumber- land	1635	23.5	68.9	2.9	38.74	6.9%
Forsyth	2004	21.8	68	9.6	27.27	11.8%
Guilford	2989	22.5	69.8	5.2	31.64	7%
Mecklen- burg	2907	11.6	79.5	8.2	29.27	4.1%
Wake	2816	20.1	70.5	9.4	15.53	10%
State Total	41,008	14,479	23,334	2306	26.08	6.1%

Table 2: Criminal and juvenile justice statistics. Sources: [1] North Carolina Advocates for Justice Prison Population report, 2011; [2] NC Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice Needs Assessment. Key: WH= White, BL = Black, HI = Hispanic or Latino

Methodology

Durham: A Case Study

The primary case selected for this study was Durham County, North Carolina. The first and primary reason for this selection was the specificity of the topic to Durham: the city's trends in gang membership have been exceptional for the state, and thus compel some form of examination as to why trends in Durham differ from those in other, similar jurisdictions. Second, the concentration of gang activity in a relatively small geographical space provides a unique setting in which to study juvenile gang membership more broadly: Durham has a gang population that is highly disproportionate to its size, with estimates of the number of gangs ranging widely from the low forties to more than eighty. Third, the researcher's personal experience and knowledge of the county, contacts within key agencies, and proximity throughout the year enabled a maximum exposure to any developments in gang activity or gang interventions. Within Durham, this study concentrated principally on changes in youth gang membership and policy since 2003, (a) since the juvenile intake process was significantly reformed in 2003 (creating issues of comparability for older data), and (b) since this time frame captures the duration of membership for virtually all juvenile gang member interviewees.

⁴⁷ Needs Assessment Data from the NC Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN)

Data Collection

Juvenile gang membership is a complex public safety and child welfare issue with an extensive number of stakeholders and an emotional, often volatile political weight. For this reason, great care was taken to produce as comprehensive and balanced a view as possible. Information was collected from both qualitative and quantitative sources in an attempt to obtain 360-degree view of juvenile gang membership in Durham.

It is inherently difficult to gather hard numbers on gangs, since by definition gangs operate outside of the bounds of the law and therefore are not likely to engage with any systematic approach towards intelligence-gathering. Therefore a majority of the information collected and used for this study is qualitative rather than quantitative. Due to the politics, emotion, and urban mythology that tend to surround gangs and gang activity, information from interviews was analyzed cautiously and bolstered where possible with additional sources. Only those findings which were consistent among multiple interviewees are included in the results section of this study.

Interviews with youth and representatives of key local agencies form the primary base of information for this study⁴⁸. Additional sources of information and insight included observations of juvenile court intake interviews, an immersive three month observation period at the Durham Criminal Justice Resource Center (including at least 1-2 days per week in the juvenile justice offices of the Durham Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice), gang-related crime data from the Durham Police Department, a ride-along with the Durham Police Department's Violent Incident Response Team (VIRT), a survey of all Durham Public Schools high school and middle school teachers and certified staff⁴⁹, a focus group with nine school resource officers, analysis of all news articles published regarding gangs in North Carolina since 2003, and a one-day observation of the Gang Resistance, Education and Training (GREAT) summer camp.

Interviews with law enforcement and court counselors in counties outside of Durham were used to contextualize the Durham-specific findings and identify whether there may be aspects of the juvenile gang membership problem which are unique to Durham. For this purpose, particular attention was paid to Guilford, Cumberland, and Forsyth counties, which have roughly similar city sizes, racial and socioeconomic demographics, and geography; and have been cited by Durham officials as the most useful comparison counties in the region.

Logical Process for Deriving Policy Implications

The central question of this study is how changes in juvenile gang membership should inform public safety *policy*. Because most policy requires the balancing of multiple interests, it cannot usually be derived directly from pure data; rather, some analysis is required. In order to avoid assumptive recommendations, policy implications in this paper are based on either direct statements from multiple interviewees, or derived logically from gaps between Durham's stated gang reduction goals and observed implementation of these goals.

⁴⁸ See Sources section for a full list of interviewees and details about the interview process

⁴⁹ Note: The DPS Perceptions of Gang Activity survey was designed by the researcher primarily for the update to the Comprehensive Gang Assessment, directed by Gang Reduction Strategy Manager Jim Stuit

Results

Should juvenile gang membership matter to policymakers?

Evaluating juvenile gang involvement statistics

An examination of NC-JOIN data collection methods in Durham and other counties revealed several limitations which may undermine the usefulness of current juvenile gang membership numbers. The primary source for juvenile gang membership data in the NC-JOIN database is self-identification, which may occur during a child's intake interview upon entering the juvenile justice system or in subsequent meetings with his or her court counselor⁵⁰. A counselor only definitively counts a child as gang-involved (i.e., checking "Yes" under the category "Gang Member or Associate") if they *self-identify* as such. However, several additional sources of information may lead a counselor to prompt some children more than others if they have reason to believe that there is gang involvement⁵¹. As a result of these methods, a number of limitations of this data were observed.

In order to fully assess the value of juvenile gang data, intake interviews were observed in several counties⁵². This allowed the researcher to assess whether there were qualitative differences in the way different jurisdictions solicited information about gang involvement from their clients. While the content and manner of asking questions proved to be relatively standard across different jurisdictions, one significant qualitative difference was observed in the environment of the DACJJ office space in the presence or absence of gang posters. In Forsyth, Cumberland, and Guilford counties, such posters were few or nonexistent. In Durham, however, gang materials are highly visible and posted both throughout the public spaces (such as hallways), as well as in the offices of many of the court counselors. This may make the topic of gang membership more likely to come up in discussions with court counselors. One Durham court counselor noted that "A lot of the times kids will come in and [see] this poster about gang activities and the signs and all that... they'll be really into it, and sometimes they'll try to do the hand signs. Other times they'll say, oh, that's what so- and so- does."⁵³

Throughout all comparison counties, counselors were found to incorporate information from multiple sources in order to gain the most comprehensive understanding of clients' circumstances⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Data in NC-JOIN comes from two assessments, stored as separate data sets. The first assessment is a "Risk Assessment", based only on the initial intake interview. The second is a "Needs Assessment", which is updated as court counselors continue to work with a child. Because of this difference, Needs Assessments tend to provide slightly higher, but more accurate, data regarding juvenile gang membership, since as counselors work more with a client, they build rapport with the child and develop greater knowledge of his or her life. Therefore the NC-JOIN numbers referred to in this study are based on the Needs Assessment data.

⁵¹ See Figure 1 on page 28 for a flowchart of the NC-JOIN data collection process

⁵² See Appendix B5 for more information about the comparability of juvenile gang membership data between counties

⁵³ Interview with Jesse Edmonds, Durham court counselor

⁵⁴ Key external sources include parents (who are present during intake interviews), visual identifiers or type of offense, other court-involved youth (who may have cited a gang-related friendship or rivalry with the juvenile), detention or Youth Development Center staff, law enforcement (who may informally share gang-relevant information with counselors), and observations of court proceedings.

While this is useful on a case-by-case level, it limits the consistency of aggregate data, since for most of these sources there is no standardized mechanism of observation or information sharing.

One of the more fundamental limiting factors of the data comes from inherent flaws in the reliability of self-identification in the context of gang involvement. 19 out of 20 court counselors interviewed across four counties stated that juveniles regularly lie about their gang involvement, either denying or falsely claiming gang membership or association⁵⁵. Interviews with juveniles also support this finding, as many youth interviewees claimed to be put off or confused by the question. For example, one juvenile stated that “with the court counselors like Ms. X, I don’t be telling her everything and sometimes I’m lying because I always feel like, they’re going to send you back to Broad Street [detention]. And so I don’t always tell her everything.” Another expressed that “It was kind of confusing. The reason I’m here, the thing that got me in trouble, is last year I was hanging out with a lot of friends who were in a gang and so they kind of peer pressured me into doing stuff.”⁵⁶

Part of the reason there is often confusion about gang involvement stems from ambiguity of the term “gang associate.” In the NC-JOIN database, gang members and associates are lumped together in a single metric of gang involvement, although both youth and counselors reported difficulty establishing what exactly falls under the category of “gang associate”. While gang membership typically implies a formal induction process (i.e., being “beaten in”), determining “association” requires subjectivity on the part of both the youth and the court counselor. On the institutional side, the state of North Carolina provides a checklist of twelve criteria to juvenile justice and law enforcement in an effort to standardize the identification process; meeting even one of these criteria is enough to categorize someone as a gang associate⁵⁷. However, several of these criteria are problematically general: for example, “Frequents Gang Areas” could be used to categorize entire neighborhoods as gang associates, and “Gang Terminology or Language” could encompass juveniles who repeat language they hear in music or movies. Thus simply checking a box for “gang member or associate” is a highly simplistic and even misleading way of indicating the true degree of gang involvement in a juvenile population.

The limitations described above indicate that juvenile gang membership data is probably not an accurate reflection of the real rate of court-involved youth who are gang members or associates. This places severe limits on the reliability of these statistics or the ability to draw conclusions about minor fluctuations in the data. Nevertheless, because Durham’s juvenile gang involvement rates are so much higher than the state or other counties (four times the state rate of juvenile and involvement, and double that of its closest competitor, Forsyth County), it would be unwise to dismiss very high reported rates of gang involvement as inconsequential.

⁵⁵ Interviews with court counselors, including an anonymous Durham court counselor, Danielle Hudson, Dwight Williams, Jesse Edmonds, Stephanie Green, Anonymous court counselor I, Durham DACJJ, Tonya Griffis, and Will Henderson

⁵⁶ For a full list of youth responses to this question, refer to Appendix A1. For an exploration of whether children or more likely to deny or admit membership and thus reported juvenile gang membership is more likely an over- or under-estimate, refer to Appendix B4

⁵⁷ “Gang Member Identification Criteria”; see appendix for a full list of criteria

Policy Significance of Juvenile Gang Membership

In addition to assessing the significance of quantitative trends, a major goal of this research was to strip juvenile gang membership of political baggage and seek objective ways to determine the extent to which membership itself, beyond activity, should matter to policymakers. Gang membership is not illegal; particularly if there is a decreasing relationship between Durham's gang involvement and violent crime rates, it may be that gangs are becoming less criminal and more purely social. Determining whether an issue ought to "matter" at a policy level is not merely a question of lip service paid to an issue, but rather implies allocation of resources and restructuring of existing legal and implementation frameworks in order to appropriately address the issue. Evaluating the extent to which juvenile gang membership impacts public safety in Durham is thus a fundamental part of the policy decision-making process.

Previous academic studies provide preliminary evidence that gang membership as a form group or individual identity may increase likelihood of delinquency. Longitudinal studies in Seattle and Rochester⁵⁸, referenced earlier in this paper, have shown that gang involvement will significantly increase a child's likelihood to engage in delinquent behavior, more so than simply engaging with delinquent peers who are not gang-involved. However, given the diversity of gangs even within a single jurisdiction, it is important to determine whether local evidence supports this trend. Three key areas were examined for this purpose: juvenile crime, community perception of public safety, and impact on the broader youth population. The findings detailed below indicate that juvenile gang membership as an issue has significant implications for both actual and perceived public safety in a community.

Beyond asking whether overall juvenile gang membership rates ought to be significant to policymakers, it is also necessary to examine the recent *increase* in juvenile gang membership. The answer to whether or not policymakers should place significant weight on the recent increase in this membership is "not yet". Three years is a significant amount of time for juvenile gang membership to steadily increase, but remains too short of a period to merit concern or fear that a broader increase is imminent. This skepticism is emphasized by the inconsistent nature of juvenile crime data and the number of policy changes which have occurred in the jurisdiction which may impact rates of arrest and gang member identification. That is not to say that the numbers should be dismissed entirely; being aware of a budding trend provides policymakers a valuable opportunity to examine possible contributing factors and find ways to approach these factors so that the trend does not continue. However, greater attention should be paid to qualitative changes in gang dynamics, described in subsequent pages.

Impact on Juvenile Crime

At a community level, the true impact of juvenile gang membership is based not only on how much crime is committed by young people involved in gangs, but also on what types of crimes are committed. Tables 4 and 5 indicate that this more specific focus is particularly true in Durham: while the percentage of overall gang-related juvenile crime is roughly proportional to the percentage of court-involved youth who identify as gang-involved⁵⁹, this comparison looks very different for specific categories of crime. The data in Tables 4 and 5 provide rough estimates of the proportion of several

⁵⁸ Pearson et al 1998

⁵⁹ Note: In 2012, 24.41% of juvenile crime was reported as gang-related, while 21% of juveniles identified as gang-involved. Source: Durham Police Department 2012; NC-JOIN data

noteworthy crime categories in which a juvenile gang member was a victim or suspect. From 2010-2012, juvenile gang members were victims in an average of 6.02% of total gang-related incidents, and suspects in an average of 80.96%.

These tables are not intended to give an exact proportion of juvenile crime that is gang-related, since they come from similar, but not the exact same, police incident report data sets⁶⁰. However, even if the numbers are somewhat inexact, they do strongly suggest that juvenile gang members commit a disproportionate number of certain types of crimes. For example, in 2012, 21% of court-involved youth were recorded as “gang members or associates”, and that same year roughly 55.6% of juvenile aggravated assaults were reported as gang-related. This disproportionality testifies to the importance of juvenile gang membership in elevating overall levels of juvenile crime.

Total Juvenile Crime Incidents & Juvenile Incidents with Gang Members as a Victim or Suspect (Ages 11-15) ⁶¹												
	2009			2010			2011			2012		
	Total	Gang VI/SU	%	Total	Gang VI/SU	%	Total	Gang VI/SU	%	Total	Gang VI/SU	%
All Offenses	314	62	19.7	279	72	25.8	295	69	23.39	340	83	24.41
All Violent*	19	11	57.9	21	12	57.14	16	12	75	26	8	30.77
Agg Assault	10	2	20	5	7	140	11	8	72.73	9	5	55.56
Burglary	44	6	13.64	45	16	35.56	19	13	68.42	30	3	10
Drug Violations	13	5	38.46	11	3	27.27	17	3	17.65	18	5	27.87
Homicide	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
Larceny	111	9	8.1	78	15	19.23	95	10	10.53	109	47	43.12
Rape	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Robbery	7	5	71.43	11	5	45.45	5	4	80	14	3	21.43
Sex Offenses	6	1	16.7	7	2	28.57	8	2	25	11	0	0
Simp Assault	53	7	13.2	49	3	6.12	58	7	12.07	36	4	11.11
Stolen Prop	4	0	0	8	0	0	8	0	0	22	0	0
Vandalism	37	1	2.7	21	3	14.29	32	0	0	14	1	7.14
Weapon Violat.	4	2	50	13	3	23.08	7	4	57.14	17	3	17.64

Table 3: Total juvenile crime incidents with gang members as a victim or suspect. Sources: Durham Police Department annual reports, gang-related incident data provided directly by Durham Police Department

Approximate % of Total Juvenile Incidents Involving Juvenile Gang Member Victim or Suspect (Ages 11-15)					
	2009	2010	2011	2012	Average %, 2010- 2012
All	19.7	25.8	23.39	24.41	23.33
All Violent	57.9	57.14	75	30.77	55.20

Average % of Offenses with Juvenile Gang Member(s) as Victim or Suspect, 2009-2012 :

1. Aggravated Assault (72.07%)

⁶⁰ Gang-related data was provided directly from the Durham Police Department, and includes aggregate data from police incident reports for 2009-2012. Overall crime data was not provided with this dataset and so for purposes of comparison was drawn from annual police reports for 2009-2012, publicly available online.

⁶¹ Total juvenile incidents are drawn from Durham Police Department’s annual reports for 2009-2012

Agg. Assault	20	140	72.73	55.56	72.07
Burglary	13.64	35.56	68.42	10	31.91
Drug Violations	38.46	27.27	17.65	27.87	27.81
Homicide	0	0	0	0	0
Larceny	8.1	19.23	10.53	43.12	20.25
Rape	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	71.43	45.45	80	21.43	54.58
Sex Offenses	16.7	28.57	25	0	17.57
Simple Assault	13.2	6.12	12.07	11.11	10.63
Stolen Prop	0	0	0	0	0
Vandalism	2.7	14.29	0	7.14	6.033
Weapons Violat.	50	23.08	57.14	17.64	36.97

2. Robbery (54.58%)
3. Weapons Violations (36.97%)
4. Burglary (31.91%)
5. Drug Violations (27.81%)
6. Larceny (20.25%)
7. Sex Offenses (17.57%)
8. Simple Assault (10.63%)
9. Vandalism (6.03%)

Table 4: Percentages of specific juvenile crime categories in which a gang member is a victim or suspect. Source: Gang Demographic data provided directly by the Durham Police Department

Involvement Categories for Juvenile Gang Persons (Ages 11-15) in DPD Incident Report Database				
	2010	2011	2012	Average % of Total Juvenile Gang Persons for DPD Incidents, 2010-2012
Associate	0	1	0	0.45%
Involved Other	9	11	7	11.33%
Suspect	66	53	79	80.96%
Victim	4	8	2	6.02%
Witness	1	1	1	1.18%
Total	80	75	89	100%

Table 5 Involvement categories for juvenile gang persons. Source: Gang Demographic data provided directly by the Durham Police Department.

Although these data do indicate that gang membership plays a role in certain types of crime, they do not provide sufficient information to conclusively address the question posed earlier in this study as to whether there is a decreasing relationship between gang membership and gang crime. With currently available data this relationship is almost impossible to determine; North Carolina has made multiple changes to its gang involvement identification process and did not standardize its definition of a gang until 2008. Nevertheless, longer-term trends do show a decline in violent and overall crime; thus it is important to examine further whether gang membership impacts a community in ways that extend beyond crime.

Community Perceptions of Public Safety

A number of interviewees stated that the presence of juvenile gangs in a community has no negative effects beyond crime itself. However, among those interviewees who did see additional negative impacts of juvenile gang membership, three theoretical streams emerged. First, a number of interviewees noted that in addition to crime itself, gangs place a psychological burden on a community, causing a level of community-wide fear that would not otherwise be present. One Durham court counselor noted that “Gangs make people fearful that crime could occur even if it’s not occurring”⁶². Another interviewee

⁶² Interview with Anonymous court counselor, Durham DACJJ, court counselor in Durham juvenile court counselor

adds that “The people that deal with it are afraid. They can’t come out of their house. They’re terrified.”⁶³ A retired member of the Blood gang elaborated that gangs impact a community because “people don’t feel safe, people are getting robbed. And because of the guns. They’re giving away free guns to young people.”⁶⁴

Second, several interviewees claimed that gang membership has major negative effects on the development and sense of identity of those children who become gang-involved themselves⁶⁵, which has long-term implications in the way these children navigate the adult world.

Finally, several interviewees stated that one of the most important implications of the presence of juvenile gang membership is its impact on other children in the community, particularly through activity in schools. “You may have a child in school, and they’re trying to recruit. So just because it’s not in your neighborhood doesn’t mean your son or daughter doesn’t encounter it in school.”⁶⁶ A survey disseminated to all DPS middle school and high school teachers and certified staff provides more substantive insight as to whether gangs impact schools and other children⁶⁷. The survey was disseminated via email to 1383 staff members and completed by 541, yielding a response rate of 39.12%. Of the 541 respondents, 352 (65%) reported that they perceive gang members to be present in their school. However, a somewhat smaller number (253, or 46.8%) reported that they perceived gang *activity* in their schools. Figure 2 illustrates reported gang activities on school property. Of the activities that staff reported observing, the most commonly observed were social interaction with other gang members (233 responses), skipping class (161), and fighting (148). Recruiting, often a source of great concern, was observed by 94 respondents.

⁶³ Interview with anonymous court counselor, Durham juvenile court counselor

⁶⁴ Interview with “J”, retired Blood member, and Marcia Owen, head of the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham

⁶⁵ Interview with District Court Judge Pat Evans; Danielle Hudson, Durham juvenile court counselor; Raheem Aleem, Head SRO with the Durham Sheriff; Johnny Pompey, CJRC substance abuse counselor and former Parks & Rec employee

⁶⁶ Interview with Dwight Williams, Durham juvenile court counselor

⁶⁷ See Appendix A4 for more details regarding the DPS Perceptions of Gang Presence survey

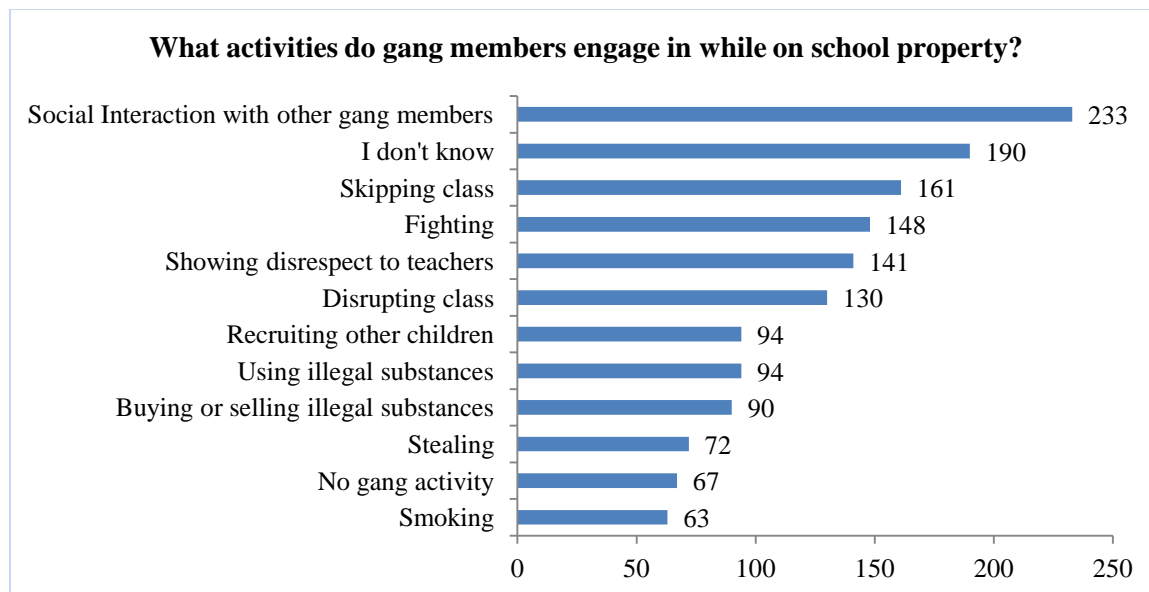


Figure 2 Gang activities on school property, Source: 2013 survey of DPS high school and middle school teachers and certified staff, Updated Comprehensive Gang Assessment

Although the response rate to this survey was moderate and likely biased towards those teachers who have had more significant experience with juvenile gang membership, 541 teachers is nevertheless large enough to yield some insight as to how gangs impact schools; the above data do indicate that gang membership is present in Durham Public Schools, and that several commonly observed activities may impact other children in either a social or academic setting. However, in comments sections of the survey a number of teachers noted that the most common behaviors described above are not unique to gang members, but are common among the broader youth population as well.

These comments add a level of uncertainty regarding gang activity in schools, which leads to another relevant policy discussion. One consideration with juvenile gang membership is the idea that juvenile gang membership may not be equally relevant to all community agencies. The above evidence provides a fairly clear statement that gang membership ought to concern law enforcement. However, for Durham Public Schools the relevance of gang membership is far less certain. While gang activity does occur, similar types of activities are also widely prevalent among the general student population. Directing higher levels of scrutiny towards gang-involved youth, whether intentionally or unintentionally, may simultaneously increase the notoriety of their gang status by drawing attention to it, and contribute to increased disconnect from school for the one scrutinized.

Changes in Juvenile Gang Membership and Dynamics

It was previously mentioned that the reported increase in juvenile gang membership may not be reflective of actual changes. However, a number of qualitative changes were found that have a more significant impact on public safety policy.

Changes in who joins: the Broadening Base

Conventionally, most juvenile gang members in Durham are believed to join a gang as a result of personal and systemic push factors: gang activity in their neighborhood or school, poverty, a desire for protection, residence with a single parent, sensitivity to social pressures among peers, etc. Unfortunately, the (stereo-) “typical” gang kid is a poor, African-American boy who been lured towards the gang lifestyle⁶⁸.

However, several Durham court counselors, law enforcement officers, youths, and other interviewees reported observing a broadening base of those juveniles who join gangs, including an increased number of females, youth from middle- or upper-class socioeconomic backgrounds, youth with two-parent households, younger children, and Hispanic youth. Gang involvement among younger children in middle school and upper elementary is partially attributable to a generational wave of gang membership in Durham in which increasing numbers of young children have gang-involved family members. The increase in reported Hispanic gang involvement is due primarily to the dramatic increase in the overall Hispanic population in Durham since the early 1990’s.

A commonly reported reason for the broadening base of children who may become gang-involved is the glorification of “gang culture” and violence in contemporary popular media. Music, television, and movies frequently depict gang membership as a way of obtaining respect, money, protection, social belonging, glory, adventure, and other benefits. There are countless examples of this, from rapper Lil Wayne’s frequent references to the Blood gang (including songs titled “I’m Blooded”, “Red Nation”, and “Blood Niggaz”), to Serena Williams’ “Crip walk” victory dance after winning a tennis trophy, to a long Hollywood tradition of “classic” gang films (*The Godfather*, *Gangs of New York*, *American Gangster*)⁶⁹.

However, the existence of a national culture that glorifies gang membership and activity does not explain why the reported rate of juvenile gang members and associates in Durham is so much higher than that of the state or even demographically and geographically comparable counties⁷⁰. A number of inconsistencies exist in the data, yet even so it is improbable that reporting differences fully explain why Durham’s rates are four times the state rate and double its closest competitor among the comparison counties, Forsyth. One theory which emerged during interviews as to why Durham may have uniquely high gang membership was the existence of an intensified local gang culture. For years, Durham has faced a reputation as a focal point of gang activity, and there are numerous examples of this: one court counselor from Forsyth County, for example, stated that many of her gang-involved clients voiced a mentality that “We want to be as big, and as bad, and as tough as the Chicago’s, the LAs, and the New York’s, Raleigh-Durham even.”⁷¹ This quote, while not factually useful, does indicate a perception of Durham as a city whose reputation for gang activity can be lumped (however loosely) with far larger and more notorious gang cities.

⁶⁸ Interview with Dwight Williams, Durham juvenile court counselor

⁶⁹ Lil Wayne 2007; Lil Wayne 2011; Lil Wayne 2010; Serena Williams 2012; *The Godfather*, 1972; *Gangs of New York*, 2002; *American Gangster*, 2007.

⁷⁰ For juvenile gang involvement rates, refer to Table 3 on page 30

⁷¹ Anonymous Court Counselor 2, Forsyth County Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice

This local reputation has been reinforced by news coverage in the state of North Carolina. An analysis of all articles published in major North Carolina newspapers since 1993⁷² shows that until 2008, more articles were written about gang activity in Durham than any other city or county, including large metropolitan areas such as Raleigh and Charlotte. While gang activity has been a genuine problem in Durham throughout this time period, it is a problem which has been echoed in multiple other counties, a fact which is not reflected in the media coverage.

Drawing yet more attention to gangs in Durham, two major national media documentaries in the mid-2000's featured the city of Durham as the example of a small US city overrun by gangs. In 2005, Al Roker of The Today Show profiled Durham in a documentary about gangs in mid-sized cities entitled "Al Roker Investigates: Menace on Main Street"⁷³. Two years later, a group of independent filmmakers and musicians produced "Welcome to Durham, USA", which reignited national attention when it won the Best Documentary Award at the New York International Film Festival⁷⁴. Both documentaries took a sensationalist approach which left city officials scrambling to mend Durham's reputation (and in the case of Welcome to Durham, led directly to the arrest of several documentary subjects, leaving a residue of mistrust⁷⁵). Despite subsequent economic development in Durham, some evidence of this reputation remains.

Within Durham, several court counselors voiced concern that this type of notoriety may create a reinforcement cycle in which youth feel that they have a collective reputation to live up to; that in order to earn respect they must be seen as equal or greater "gangsters" than their predecessors⁷⁶. One court counselor stated that in her caseload, "I think there are a lot of people saying that they are [involved] just because they feel like they're supposed to say it, because Durham has that reputation."⁷⁷ This claim is supported by interviews with court-involved youth, a majority of which expressed a belief that half or more of all children in Durham are gang-involved⁷⁸. While this number is implausible, it does reflect that many of Durham's court-involved youth regard gang involvement as normal, or even mainstream.

Changes in internal gang dynamics and activity

Cohesiveness

Changes in internal gang dynamics and cohesiveness may have a significant impact on the number of youth who become gang involved. Several interviewees, including a retired Blood member, Jim Stuit of the Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee, and several youths, noted that some of

⁷² See Appendix B3 for a full table of media coverage of gangs in North Carolina. Articles gathered from the National Gang Center's resource database, www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Resources

⁷³ *Al Roker Investigates: Menace on Main Street*, 2005.

⁷⁴ "2006 Press Releases", Welcome To Durham blog

⁷⁵ Interviews with "J", retired Blood gang member; Joe Costa, Durham School Resource Officer

⁷⁶ Interview with Danielle Hudson, Durham juvenile court counselor; Jesse Edmonds, Durham juvenile court counselor; Stephanie Green, Durham juvenile court counselor; Anonymous Court Counselor I, Durham DACJJ, Durham juvenile court counselor; Jim Stuit, Gang Reduction Strategy Manager

⁷⁷ Interview with Stephanie Green, Durham juvenile court counselor

⁷⁸ Youth interviewees (10 total) were asked: "How many kids in Durham would you say are in a gang? For reference, there are about 64,000 kids total." Responses were as follows: "6,500", "20-35000", "half", "40,000", "50-70%", "75%", "More than half", "About 70%", "A lot", and "More than 2000". See Appendix A1 for a full description of youth interviews and responses

Durham's larger gangs are currently in a state of reduced cohesiveness, in which rules of the gang are less stringently enforced. One youth noted that "there are a lot of cliques that aren't colorbanging anymore; they just want to hang out and chill, and just smoke. They'll maybe rob some people, maybe shoot some stuff, but they ain't real. Like, if they say they shoot they won't shoot."⁷⁹ Another juvenile interviewee stated that "really the kids coming in saying they're in a gang now, most of them they're fake. When you're in a gang you're not supposed to talk about it, you're supposed to be slick. But these kids are just all up 'Crips! Bloods!' And then that's how stuff starts to happen, because they're off running their mouth about it."⁸⁰ According to members of the Durham Police Department's Violent Incident Response Team, which focuses most of its efforts on gang-related crime, splintering within gangs- specifically within a few sets affiliated with the Blood gang- was behind a string of homicides over the summer of this year⁸¹. Sergeant Raheem Aleem from the Durham Sheriff's Office explained further: "It has begun to escalate. When you have certain things that happen and the gang starts to splinter, and you have little subsets, these little subsets who try to make a name for themselves are worse than the gang itself. Because the subsets are trying to make a name, so they'll do anything crazy. While the gang sits there and says, don't mess with my paper, my women, or my dope, the splinter says, I want your money, I want your paper, I want your women, and I want your dope. So I'm going to get it, even if I have to get it from my own boys. So then it starts to splinter off, and grow, and the problem starts to increase."⁸²

With such incohesiveness and the resulting lax enforcement of gang rules, the perceived risks associated with joining a gang may be lower for a child considering whether or not to seek gang affiliation. If that child has seen his or her friend(s) claim gang affiliation with little or no consequences from the gang, then he or she may perceive that it is possible to claim gang membership without being accountable to gang leadership or without "putting in work" to gain access to full membership.

Types of activity

A related theme that emerged along with the changes in internal gang dynamics was changes in gang activities and tactics. Within this category there are two major trends: (1) That gangs have been getting more violent, and that juveniles play an increasing role in this violence, and (2) That there is an increasing awareness among gangs of the advantages of using juveniles for criminal activity, since the punishment they will receive is far less than their counterparts who are sixteen or older.

The increasing level of violent crime committed by gang members was noted by court counselors as well as youth interviewees. One counselor remarked that "The violent crimes to me are becoming more prevalent, from what I've seen in Durham. And a lot of kids are not afraid to do what they have to do to get rank, they just weren't afraid.... and now, I mean 15 years ago, B&E's [breaking and entering charges]... I mean, to break into someone's house is pretty serious. Now, it's nothing. To have a B&E, it's nothing. And that is definitely one of the ways you can get rank in a gang. And it's just... there's not a lot of fear"⁸³ Several youth interviewees cited that gangs were "trying to get harder"⁸⁴, "getting worse"⁸⁵ and "more violent"⁸⁶

⁷⁹ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile J

⁸⁰ Interview with anonymous Juvenile C

⁸¹ Officer in the Violent Incident Response Team during a police ride-along

⁸² Interview with Raheem Aleem, Sergeant in the Durham Sheriff's Office and head of the SRO program

⁸³ Interview with Will Henderson, Durham juvenile court counselor

A gang population which is perceived to be more violent may motivate more young people to join gangs for reasons of protection. Sergeant Raheem Aleem, who oversees the School Resource Officer (SRO) program, described the importance of protection in propelling a young person towards gang involvement. “Some kids are Monday through Friday, 6:30-3:30 gangsters. Tell you why. I need to join a gang so I can walk to my school bus. I gotta navigate my neighborhood? I gotta be down with them. I need to be able to get home in the afternoon, to ride the bus and not get jumped. I need to be able to go into the bathroom and use the bathroom without the fear that two or three boys are going to jump me. So sometimes I have to play that role, even though it’s not me.”⁸⁷ Still, according to some longtime observers, this uptick in violence may not be indicative of a larger trend. Judge Marcia Morey remarked, “Do I think gang activity has intensified over the past couple of years? No. I think it was worse, years ago.”⁸⁸

Recruitment strategies

The intentional recruitment of younger children who could “take the heat” with fewer consequences was also a recurrent theme throughout interviews. As one youth interviewee remarked, “They’re recruiting younger, these little kids, for the drug stuff. Because a twelve year old is not going to jail for a long time. A little kid is probably not going to get arrested.”⁸⁹ Younger gang members are likely to be pressured to put in more criminal groundwork due to the prospect of a clean record when they turn sixteen, and the perception that they are less likely to be arrested in the first place. This perception is not unfounded. On an individual basis, law enforcement officers may be reluctant to arrest juveniles for personal or political reasons; at a policy level, there is a direct disincentive to do so since juvenile arrests result in a much larger volume of processing paperwork than do adult arrests.

Prevalence and types of visible gang identifiers

Another shift in juvenile gang dynamics in Durham was in the prevalence and types of visible gang identifiers⁹⁰. While blatant colors and flagging have been observed in the past, over the past few years there has been a movement towards more subtle signs. These include small accessories, rosaries, colors in the trim or detailing on clothing (rather than the article itself), tattoos in more discrete locations, haircuts and eyebrow slashes, and flags folded in pockets rather than kept on display⁹¹. Most interviewees attributed this shift to a growing recognition that blatant identifiers make the person sporting these identifiers an obvious target for law enforcement or disciplinary action.

⁸⁴ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile D

⁸⁵ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile B

⁸⁶ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile G

⁸⁷ Interview with Sergeant Raheem Aleem, head of the SRO program in the Durham Sheriff’s Office

⁸⁸ Interview with Judge Marcia Morey

⁸⁹ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile D

⁹⁰ For a list of common gang identifiers, refer to the “Definitions” section on page 13

⁹¹ Interviews with Stephanie Green, Durham juvenile court counselor; Joe Costa, Durham Sheriff; Tonya Griffis, Durham juvenile court counselor; Anonymous court counselor I, Durham DACJJ; Danielle Hudson, Durham juvenile court counselor;

Decreasing visibility of gangs in schools

The Durham Public Schools high school and middle school staff survey yielded a majority of respondents who perceive gang membership to be present in their school. Of those respondents who did report observing gang membership and activity in their school, a majority stated that both membership and activity have visibly decreased over the past five years, as seen in Figure 3. However, this perceived decrease may be partially attributable to the movement away from visible identifiers, cited in the previous section.

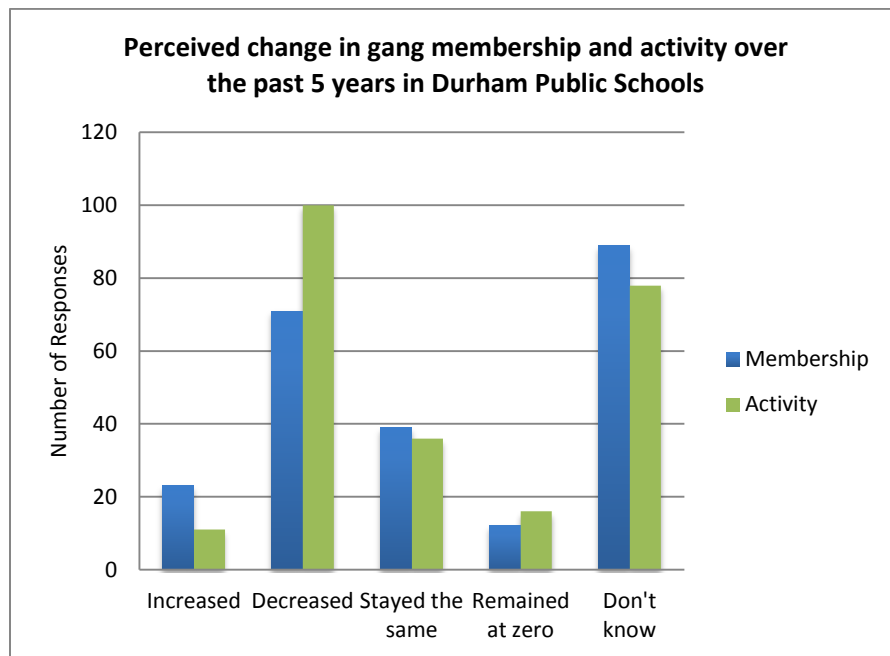


Figure 3: Perceived change in gang membership and activity over the past five years in Durham Public Schools. Source: DPS Perceptions of Gang Presence survey, 2013 Update to the Durham Comprehensive Gang Assessment

How should changes in juvenile gang dynamics inform policy?

The following findings are organized within the framework of Durham’s three-pronged comprehensive gang reduction strategy, which includes initiatives for prevention, intervention, and suppression of gang membership. “Identification” is included as a preliminary category which touches on all of the main prongs of Durham’s gang reduction strategy. .

Identification

First, and perhaps most obviously, there is a need at both the county and the state level to examine existing protocol for identifying gang members and associates. The current threshold of criteria required by the state to validate a gang member or associate is too general to be useful in an era in which gang language, paraphernalia, and lifestyle permeate popular media. Several other counties in North Carolina appear to recognize this, departing from the state-recommended number of criteria for validation

and instead requiring two to three criteria for categorization as an associate and four or more to qualify as a member⁹². This is particularly true in the case of NC-JOIN data, which lumps “gang member or associate” into a single data entry category. If strictly interpreted, the category “gang member or associate” will include an enormous range of involvement levels. For some youth living in neighborhoods with a high gang presence, “association” could simply mean interacting socially with their peers in the neighborhood. Others were previously affiliated strongly with a gang but consider themselves inactive. Then within the same category are hard-core members who may be actively engaging in delinquent behavior, encouraging their peers to engage in delinquent behavior, or recruiting younger members.

While on a case-by-case basis, court counselors will include details on a client’s gang association or membership, as an aggregate metric this number is severely misleading. There is such a wide range of involvement levels that it becomes almost arbitrary to delineate between “gang member and associate” and not. Because of the implications that identification with a gang can have on a child’s treatment, experience in school and other institutions, counselors will often utilize some discretionary flexibility in recording whether or not a child is gang-involved. There are sound reasons for doing so, particularly given the possibility of denial or false flagging. However, this does lead to inconsistencies between counselors and between counties as to what level of involvement will push them to affirm a child’s gang involvement.

A possible alternative metric would be to evaluate all clients on a scale of gang involvement based on specific criteria. For example, a 0-5 scale in which “0” indicated that there was no engagement with gangs, and five would be those individuals who had committed a certain number of offenses for motivations attributable to the gang. This metric should be dynamic and updatable, since one of the problems with current gang databases is that names are rarely removed once an individual is entered into that database, even if they cease involvement with a gang. Identifying which youth have the most significant gang-involvement will provide a far more useful metric for court counselors, community outreach workers, or others looking to tailor intervention services towards a specific young person.

Prevention

Educational initiatives

The broadening base of children who are joining gangs indicates a need for broader, earlier, and more inclusive prevention education. GREAT is the only current comprehensive prevention education program in Durham, and there has been some debate as to its effectiveness at the national level.⁹³ However, there is a need for a local longitudinal program evaluation to determine whether GREAT has helped to reduce gang activity and membership in Durham; as well as a willingness to expand or restructure prevention education if GREAT does not appear to be effective.

⁹² Interviews with Chris Kempf, Fayetteville Police Department; Michelle Guarino, Wilmington Police Department; Jeanette Dockery, Greensboro Police Department

⁹³ Aschcroft 2004

Addressing gang normalization

In order for educational initiatives to be successful, gang prevention must also seek to address the normalization of gang membership among juvenile-aged youth. It is not a stretch attribute the broadening base of juvenile gang-involved youth in part to a more normalized attitude towards gangs, particularly given results of interviews with youth that showed a majority of interviewees believe half or more of all Durham children are gang-involved. If Durham is to curb juvenile gang membership in the long term, it is imperative that it address the existence of such a gang culture, particularly in schools or neighborhoods where these attitudes are most prevalent (which schools and areas these are would be best determined by local experts and is not included in this research).

Creating a strategy specifically intended to counter pro-gang culture would be a multifaceted and long-term endeavor, yet worthwhile given the prevalence of such a culture in Durham. Suppression tactics, education, and intervention strategies alone do not suffice as a deterrent when oftentimes detention may be seen as a boon to a young person's reputation or street credibility. Essentially, it needs to be less "cool" to join a gang.

Seeking cultural change is always difficult and requires creativity, specificity, and an early start. For example, a mentorship program between high school students and late elementary or early middle school students in which older students are expressly trained to send the message that gang involvement is socially undesirable could help influence attitudes early on. However, it is important to note that increased social acceptance of gangs is far from the only reason why juveniles are inclined to join gangs; addressing this acceptance must be only one facet of a larger strategy. Efforts to reduce acceptance of gangs should be paired with alternative means by which youth may find the kind of social acceptance which may lead them to join gangs in the first place.

One element of such a campaign that emerged in interviews was the need for media coverage which avoids sensationalizing or ignoring gangs, but rather reports honestly on many of the effects that they bring. These effects include less-than-glorious realities such as the frequency at which gang members report on other members even within their own gang or set, or the low frequency at which gang members will visit fellow members who are in prison. One interviewee remarked that "The media does a good job of making attractive things that shouldn't be attractive. But I also think that the media has a responsibility to *educate* the community about what's really going on. To tell the truth—all parts of it. And right now, by ignoring gangs they're not doing that."⁹⁴ Another interviewee described the role of media in the following way: "A lot of gangs do want attention, even if it's negative attention. What might be better is to *report* gangs. To say, you know, three Bloods did this that and the other, but then follow up and say three Bloods were *caught*. And even better if you add in who reported, that some of their own members might have reported them."⁹⁵ Reporting such realities has the potential to undermine fundamental values which many gangs tout, such as loyalty to other members.

⁹⁴ Interview with Anonymous leader of a community-based gang prevention program in Durham

⁹⁵ Interview with Raheem Aleem, emphasis reflects verbal emphasis by speaker

Intervention

Establishing an exit option that doesn't hinge on arrest

One critical hole in Durham's network of gang prevention services is the existence of a widely accessible coordinated system to assist youth who wish to leave gangs⁹⁶. Although a number of mechanisms, including gang posters and the GREAT program, discourage children from joining a gang and ask them to leave if they become involved, there are virtually no visible options for children to act accordingly. At this time, the only program which regularly assists youth to leave a gang is Project BUILD. However, due to the intensive nature of its services there is a limit to the number of clients it can serve. In addition, Project BUILD obtains its clients through referrals, a vast majority of which come from the juvenile court system. For youth who are gang-involved but not currently involved with the juvenile justice system, there is no visible exit option.

Creating a well-known, inter-agency contingency plan to facilitate children's ability to leave a gang if they wish to do so offers a compelling way to expand the number of children who leave gangs at a relatively low cost. While skeptics may argue that the likelihood of a young person seeking out services to leave a gang is low, the absence of any such services precludes them from even attempting to do so. Indeed, providing the door by which a young person may exit a gang on their own is particularly critical since by many accounts the most important factor in propelling a youth towards permanent disengagement from the gang is that "They have to want to change."⁹⁷ This gap is also partially informed by observation of a specific incident in which a young gang member approached his substance abuse counselor about wishing to exit the gang. After making multiple calls to local nonprofits and law enforcement officers, there was no clear indication as to the next steps to take for this young person. If adults in Durham are unaware of the necessary steps needed to assist young people attempting to leave gangs, then it is highly unlikely that the youth themselves are aware of these steps.

Several components to gang exit should be included in such a plan: motivation, physical safety, and alternatives. Findings of this research also point towards several important elements which should be included:

First, the specifics of this contingency plan should be designed and agreed upon by key participating agencies that work with juvenile gang member and associates, including schools, the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice, law enforcement, and key community gang intervention agencies such as Project BUILD. This will ensure early buy-in to the plan and therefore a higher likelihood of success.

Second, the plan should be sufficiently well-known that any staff member of these agencies in whom a youth might confide would be immediately aware of the appropriate steps to take. Establishing a single "first stop" for youth in which their needs could be further assessed is a way to simplify this. Ideally, this first point of contact will be somewhat discrete, which a youth may go to (or be called to) with reasonable assurance that their peers will not find out why they are going.

⁹⁶ Interview with Judge Pat Evans

⁹⁷ Interview with "J", retired member of the Blood gang

Third, there must be discrete and well-advertised mechanisms by which youth could reach out in the event that they wish to exit the gang. Having a gang hotline with an easy-to-remember and symbolic number (ex: 919-888-SAFE) is an important first step. It may also be useful to incorporate social media as a way by which a young person could solicit help, for example by establishing a Facebook profile which young people could message or find further information from. In order to be useful to youth, these mechanisms must be advertised widely and creatively, for example through semi-permanent sticker/flyers in the bathrooms of schools which experience high levels of gang activities. Similar strategies are currently employed at Duke University to advertise outreach mechanisms for victims of sexual assault, who typically have extremely low reporting rates due to the stigma attached.

Finally, some manner of physical protection or a “safe house” must be a critical element of whatever plan is devised. Multiple youth interviewees reported that it was dangerous or impossible to get out of a gang. “Mark Jacobson” reported that “I mean... some gangs won’t let you out. I think for my set, you’d only get out by being killed. It’s supposed to be for life. Blood in, blood out.”⁹⁸ Another stated that “You get jumped out.”⁹⁹ Many agreed that even getting jumped out might not guarantee separation from the gang. “It depends on the OG, it’s all up to the OG. And then like it might not be full out, like they could still call you... most of them have to stay.”¹⁰⁰ The importance of protection will vary from set to set or gang to gang, and it is possible that in some cases, relocation services may need to be utilized to ensure the juvenile’s safety.

In the longer-term, a young person’s needs must be met to ensure that he or she remains out of the gang. These services would be best determined by existing programs that have proven successful at wrapping around the needs of youth, such as Project BUILD or the PROUD Program.

Suppression

Inconsistency in gang reduction measures was found across prevention, intervention, and suppression strategies. However, law enforcement inconsistencies were both the most extensive and have the most significant implications for public safety.

Consistency is an important step towards securing a long-term decrease in gang membership. Michelle Guarino, a member of the North Carolina Gang Investigator’s Association and gang expert who helped to pioneer an inter-agency gang strategy in Wilmington, remarked that “Durham was one of the first [cities] that had new agencies come to coach and collaborate to address the problems. Now that’s happened numerous times since the late ‘90’s. I’m not sure what has really happened, but it seems like there’s been a lot of trying things and dropping them, starting programs and then turning around. And kids know that. You need a consistency, both for the people who are implementing it and for the kids. For the ones who are trying to carry out these strategies, it’s better for morale if you don’t constantly have to worry about whether your project will be backed, or your idea will have support. For the kids, there’s no real motivation to listen to what you’re saying or follow your advice if they know that your program won’t be around in 6 months. Why would they do what you say if you won’t be there to enforce it?”¹⁰¹ A leading administrator from one of the key gang intervention programs in Durham added that “Durham has

⁹⁸ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile J

⁹⁹ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile I

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile G

¹⁰¹ Interview with Michelle Guarino, currently of the Chapel Hill Police Department

a somewhat high level of gang activity because we've looked at intervention and prevention, but haven't consistently focused on it. I think that's the key part. For example, the gang unit is gone, and we've had all these homicides recently...they're not happening for no reason. I don't think we focus enough on prevention that is actually specific to gangs."¹⁰²

The fluctuations in gang reduction law enforcement initiative may have direct bearing on both membership levels and the rate at which gang membership and association are reported. This is particularly the case with year-to-year changes in the use of the GangNet database. GangNet, is a privately owned database which aims to "close the information gap and provide real-time information to officers on the street...mak[ing] it easy for officers to record and track gang members and their activities and share the information across departments, agencies, states and regions."¹⁰³ When the CAGI grant terminated in 2010, GangNet was no longer funded and ceased to be used. As a result, the rate at which Durham law enforcement were able to validate gang members decreased. Without Gangnet, police have relied primarily on the general police database, though this is not as easily useable for law enforcement officers on the street. One officer gained access to Gangnet through a contact at the North Carolina Gang Investigator's Association and was able to continue validations on that database. However, according to this officer, the lull in police efforts to actively validate new gang members means that at this time, entering new names is almost "like shooting fish in a barrel."¹⁰⁴ In other words, while police experienced a lull in their validation process, gangs continued to recruit, and thus there has been something of a backlog in the pool of gang members in Durham who may be validated.

Going forward, Durham will improve the outcomes of its overall gang reduction policy if it incorporates consistency as a principle for policymaking. Collaborative bodies such as the Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee have the potential to be used as mechanisms for holding the city and county governments accountable to this principle, providing a small amount of insulation from fluctuations in funding and politics.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this thesis, a strange scenario was laid out: an apparent increase in juvenile gang membership even as violent crime continued on a long-term decline. Since findings from this study confirm that juvenile gang members are responsible for a disproportionate amount of juvenile violent crime, this divergence between the two trends seems particularly counterintuitive.

Yet one of the first conclusions that may be drawn from this study is that the slight three-year increase in NC-JOIN gang membership rates is not yet definite enough to conclusively indicate that a real increase is occurring. Reported rates of gang membership and association among court-involved youth are subject to a range of factors which may influence the reported rate without bearing weight on the actual rate, from inconsistencies in data collection methods, to environmental factors at a DACJJ intake interview site, to changes in police tactics within the community that lead to a fluctuation in visible gang activity. The increase cannot be entirely dismissed; the flaws that affect the NC-JOIN metric for juvenile

¹⁰² Interview with an anonymous leading administrator of a Durham gang intervention program

¹⁰³ Gangnet website, <http://www.sra.com/gangnet/>

¹⁰⁴ Anonymous officer from the Durham Police Department's Violent Incident Response Team

gang involvement are the same flaws which have affected the numbers for the entire 2009-2012 period. However, this trend should be treated as a budding increase that requires further monitoring and additional investigation so that continuation of this increase can be prevented.

Where numeric trends can be largely dismissed, however, qualitative shifts in the membership and dynamics of juvenile gangs in Durham are more policy-relevant. Changes such as broadening base of gang membership fundamentally change the target audience for juvenile gang intervention programs, requiring those programs to reexamine and adjust their programs to include new demographics.

Durham has a robust gang reduction framework and a strong network of public and nonprofit agencies which have already put extensive time, money, and energy into reducing juvenile gang membership. Particularly with recent economic development in the city of Durham, it has the potential to reduce juvenile gang membership much further. However, the strategies employed by agencies must incorporate the reality of youth gangs today.

On the prevention side, this new reality includes a broader, more diverse base of would-be gang members. This broadening base is closely linked with a cultural normalization of gang involvement, and requires both expanded gang prevention education and direct efforts to challenge this normalization.

For gang intervention, current programming through Project BUILD (and more indirectly, through PROUD and other agencies) provides valuable services to children already involved in the juvenile court system. However, the capacity of these programs to reduce gang membership is limited to a relatively small number of referrals from the juvenile court system. An effort to reduce youth gang involvement more broadly must ensure that youth have access to a means to leave the gang that does not hinge on arrest and can provide basic short-term services such as physical protection from repercussions associated with leaving a gang.

At both a state and local level, there is a need to reevaluate the manner in which gang members are identified. As it stands within North Carolina state policy, the current requirements for identifying gang members are too broad and ambiguous to provide a useful metric of involvement. This is particularly true given the low threshold of evidence required by the state to determine an individual's gang involvement. Meeting even one criteria, such as frequenting a gang area (which may be a child's neighborhood or school grounds), is sufficient to categorize an individual as a gang associate data point indistinguishable from someone who is actively committing crimes in order to earn membership. As a result of this ambiguity, a number of counties employ higher thresholds of evidence than the state requires, deeming one criterion to be insufficient to verify gang association. Categorizing individuals with only peripheral gang association dilutes resources and attention which should be focused on individuals who are more involved or who are at very high risk of involvement, such as children who have one or more family members in a gang.

At a very broad level, there are two key issues which should be focal points for public discussion. First, observers both inside and outside the county have noted that Durham's gang reduction efforts are undermined by inconsistency. While this was discussed in the most detail with regards to law enforcement, this inconsistency appears across prevention and intervention programming as well. Politics and fluctuations in funding are significant barriers to achieving greater consistency, yet if Durham wishes to genuinely minimize levels of juvenile gang activity and membership, then it must find ways to

overcome these barriers. One possible route to ensure a greater level of consistency is to utilize collaborative, inter-agency bodies such as the Gang Reduction Strategy Committee to provide greater accountability with respect to this objective.

The second issue which requires an expanded dialogue is the degree to which Durham does or does not talk about gangs. Given the evidence of gang normalization among Durham youth, there is some justification for a strategy that minimizes public acknowledgement of gangs or their activities. Such attention can provide desired credibility to a gang, and simply expose the youth population to gangs at a much younger age. However, a large number of interviewees from nonprofit agencies and the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice expressed a frustration with what they perceived as a desire to hide gang membership, particularly among local politicians and law enforcement agencies. Many perceive minimization of the problem as a direct infringement on their job, and a barrier to successfully dealing with juvenile gang membership at a community-wide level.

This research does not endeavor to provide a prescriptive cure-all for juvenile gang membership. Durham as a community has been working to minimize gang membership for years and has made significant progress at reducing the negative effects that gangs may have; such a prescription would be arrogant, foolish, and full of holes. Rather, the aim of this research was to gather and synthesize as much existing knowledge as possible about juvenile gangs in Durham, from individuals who interact with this population on a regular basis in various capacities. To draw on a trite but useful metaphor, this study seeks to provide a view of the forest for those who work primarily under specific trees. Juvenile gang involvement is the result of complex factors, but it is ultimately detrimental to both the youth themselves and to the broader community. The more comprehensively it is understood, the more power a community has to design policy that will ensure the safety and security of all residents.

Sources

Interviews in Alphabetical Order

1. “J”, Retired member of the Blood gang
2. Anonymous Court Counselor A, Durham Department of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DAACJJ)
3. Anonymous Court Counselor B, Cumberland DACJJ
4. Anonymous Court Counselor C, Forsyth DACJJ
5. Anonymous Court Counselor D, Forsyth DACJJ
6. Anonymous Court Counselor E, Forsyth DACJJ
7. Anonymous Court Counselor G, Guilford DACJJ
8. Anonymous Court Counselor H, Guilford DACJJ
9. Anonymous Court Counselor I, Durham DACJJ
10. Anonymous Juvenile A
11. Anonymous Juvenile B
12. Anonymous Juvenile C
13. Anonymous Juvenile D
14. Anonymous Juvenile E
15. Anonymous Juvenile F
16. Anonymous Juvenile G
17. Anonymous Juvenile H
18. Anonymous Juvenile I
19. Anonymous Juvenile J
20. Anton Lyaifer, Durham School Resource Officer
21. Chris Kempf, Cumberland Police Department and NC Gang Investigators Association
22. Danielle Hudson, Court Counselor, Durham DACJJ
23. Darryl Macaluso, Durham Police Department, GREAT officer
24. David Arpe, Durham School Resource Officer
25. Dwight Williams, Court Counselor, Durham DACJJ
26. Frances Alexander, EDGE Program
27. Ivan Almonte, Youth Outreach Specialist at El Centro Hispano (Jovenes Program)
28. James Bjurstrom, Duke Police Department, Member of the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham
29. Jamie Williams, Durham School Resource Officer
30. Jaqueline Maya-Sanchez, Jovenes Program at El Centro Hispano
31. Jeanette Dockery, Guilford Police Department
32. Jesse Edmonds, Court Counselor, Durham DACJJ
33. Jim Stuit, Durham Gang Reduction Strategy Manager
34. Joe Costa, Durham School Resource Officer
35. Johnny Pompey, Substance Abuse Counselor & former employee of Parks & Recreation
36. Josh Holland, Durham School Resource Officer
37. Karla Farabow, Court Counselor, Guilford DACJJ
38. Kelly Cohen-Mazurowski, Church World Services of Durham

39. Lubaba Mitchell, Court Counselor, Forsyth DACJJ
40. Marcia Morey, Durham District Court Judge
41. Marcia Owen, Executive Director of the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham
42. Matt Dempster, Court Counselor, Cumberland DACJJ
43. Michelle Guarino, Gang Expert, NC Gang Investigators Association
44. Morial Whitaker, Durham School Resource Officer
45. Pat Evans, Durham District Court Judge
46. Paul Martin, Sheriff's Office, formerly Durham Police Department
47. Project BUILD Anonymous Employee
48. Quillie Coath, PROUD Program
49. Raheem Aleem, Durham Head of the SRO Program
50. Samantha Coleman, Therapist at the Durham Youth Home
51. Samuel Garrick, Court Counselor, Forsyth DACJJ
52. Sandro Mendoza Xotenco, Jovenes Youth Leadership Program, El Centro Hispano
53. Staci Ottaway, Durham School Resource Officer
54. Stephani Whidby, Court Counselor, Cumberland DACJJ
55. Stephanie Green, Court Counselor, Durham DACJJ
56. Tamika Barnes, Court Counselor, Guilford DACJJ
57. Tisha Jones, Durham School Resource Officer
58. Tonya Griffis, Court Counselor, Durham DACJJ
59. Umar Muhammad, USports Consulting and the Durham Gang Reduction Strategy Steering Committee
60. William Henderson, Court Counselor, Durham DACJJ

Additional Major Sources of Information and Insight

1. 3-month immersive observation through the Durham Criminal Justice Resource Center, including 1-2 days each week in the offices of the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice and/or Juvenile Court
2. Observation of DACJJ Intake Interviews¹⁰⁵
3. Aggregate data from the North Carolina Juvenile Online Information Network (NC-JOIN), 2006-2012
4. Aggregate Gang Persons and Gang-Related Incidents data from the Durham Police Department, 2009-2012
5. Ride-Along with the Durham Police Department Violent Incident Response Team
6. Survey distributed to all Durham Public High School middle school and high school teachers and certified staff (541 responded out of 1383 contacted, or a 39.12% response rate)
7. Small survey and focus group with 9 School Resource Officers
8. One-day observation of the Gang Resistance, Education, and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) summer program, and subsequent discussion with G.R.E.A.T. officers from both DPD and the Sheriff's Office

¹⁰⁵ Note: Observation of an intake interview was scheduled for the Forsyth Division of Juvenile Justice; however the juvenile did not arrive for his or her appointment, and as yet I have been unable to reschedule

9. Analysis of all gang-related articles published in North Carolina, 2003-2013 (updated 07/23/13)
10. Attended a Criminal Thinking workshop at the Durham County Jail

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Appendices

A. Questions and Structure of Data Collection Instruments

A.1. Interviews with court-involved youth

Interviews with court-involved youth were conducted in the offices of the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice (DACJJ) in Durham. Consent was obtained from both the child and parent prior to conducting any interview. Children and their parents were approached about participating in an interview when they came to the DACJJ for a regularly scheduled meeting with their court counselor, in order to minimize the need for additional travel or place an additional scheduling burden on court counselors. Any child who was present and available at the DACJJ on a day that the researcher was also present was approached regarding an interview; thus selection of children was coincidental, though not a scientifically random sample. However, this method of conducting interviews did make it logistically difficult to conduct interviews, since juveniles often did not show up for their meetings, would come without their parents, or would refuse to participate. As a result, only 10 interviews were conducted with court-involved youth (both gang-involved and non-gang involved), though originally the intended number of interviewees was much higher.

Interviews were semi-structured, meaning that there were prepared questions but leeway was given for interviewees to digress if they wished, and followup questions varied based on interviewee responses. Notes were taken by hand during the interview, and typed up immediately afterward. Each interview was conducted one-on-one and took approximately 20-30 minutes; every child who completed an interview was given a five dollar gift card to subway.

In order to protect the identity and confidentiality of these children, real names were not recorded in connection with interview responses. Instead, each child was asked at the beginning of the interview to choose their own “fake name” which was unrelated to their real name or nickname. This served the dual purpose of protecting confidentiality and building rapport at the beginning of the interview. The researcher typically obtained background knowledge regarding the child’s reported gang involvement from his or her court counselor prior to entering each interview. However, it should be noted that actual involvement levels were highly diverse and could not necessarily be divided into a “gang” and “nongang” binary.

The follow section provides the questions used in youth interviews, and is followed by a table of the responses, stripped of identifiers and alphabetized within each question to randomize the order in which interviewees appears for each question. Much of the information provided by youths could not be used within the scope of this thesis, although it may still be valuable for those who work with juvenile gang members or associates on a daily basis.

Initially, there was an intent to strongly separate interviewees based on a “gang” versus “nongang” binary. However, during the course of interviews it quickly became apparent that this binary failed to account for the full range of gang associations. Some interviewees had former associations with gangs that they no longer claimed; others did not claim to be a part of gang but reported socializing primarily with gang members or having their own defined group which engaged in some criminal behavior. In other words, the researcher’s interviews with youth turned out to be illustrative of the

difficulties that court counselors faced when identifying gang members, although in this case the researcher did have some background regarding the juvenile's gang involvement.

Core Questions for Youth Interviewees

1. a. Who was your hero when you were a little kid? Why?
b. What about now?
2. Do you have any tattoos? (Can you tell me about them?)
3. Out of all the kids in Durham, how many would you guess are in a gang? You can say a percent or a number- there are about 64,000 kids total in Durham.
4. What went through your head when your court counselor asked if you were in a gang?
5. What do adults or authorities in Durham not understand about gangs?
6. What do you think it means to be in a gang?
7. Do you think anything has changed recently with gangs in Durham?
8. Without using names, are any of your family members in a gang?
9. This next question is pretty tough, so if you don't want to answer that's fine. Have you ever had a friend get hurt or killed because of something to do with a gang?
10. Have you ever held or used a gun?
 - a. [If yes] Without using names, can you tell me the story of how you got the gun, or how you got your first gun if there was more than one?
11. Are there any parts of Durham where you do not feel safe for reasons related to gangs?
12. What's one thing that would make your life better if you could have it?
13. Followup discussion (optional)

Additional questions for non gang-involved youth

14. The reason I'm here is to learn more about kids joining gangs in Durham. Do you have any friends or classmates that you know are in a gang?
15. What gangs do people talk about most at school?
16. What do you think kids who are part of a gang spend most of their time doing while together?
17. Has anyone ever tried to get you to join a gang (or more than one gang)?
 - a. What happened?
 - b. Where did this happen?
 - c. Have you seen someone else join a gang?
18. Did you ever consider joining a gang? Why or why not?
19. Why do kids join gangs?

Additional questions for gang-involved youth

14. So I know you have some involvement with a gang. What does it mean to be part of a gang?
 - a. Do you think being part of a gang is an important part of who you are?
15. Can you tell me a little bit about when you joined?
 - a. Did you feel that you *wanted* to join or *had* to (were forced to)? Why?
 - b. Were there other gangs you could have joined? Why that gang?
 - c. How old were you when you joined?
 - d. What happened when you became a member of the gang?

16. What do you mostly do when you're together with your friends in the gang?
17. What is the best part of being in a gang?
18. What is the worst part of being in a gang?
19. Could you get out if you wanted to?

Responses of Youth Interviewees		
Questions for all court-involved youth		
1.a	Who was your hero when you were a little kid? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Batman, cause of the cape and stuff – Batman. I always liked to watch his show. – Don't know – Firefighter, an ambulance driver, anyone in the medical field... and police, anyone like that. – My mom, she just always spent a lot of time with me and I looked up to her a lot. – My parents, cause they were always there when I was a little kid. – My uncle. When I was little and I got in trouble he would always be there to say like, 'you gotta do this', or to take care of me – No one, I didn't have any. – Spiderman, 'cause he could fly – Tupac Shakur
1.b	Who do you look up to now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Beyonce – Don't know – My cousin, he doesn't get in trouble – My uncle – No one – No one – No one... myself. – Nobody really... still my mom I guess – Now I guess it's my uncle, cause he really took care of me all when I was growing up – Tupac
2	Do you have any tattoos?	<p>No (7)</p> <p>Yes (3)</p>
3	Out of all the kids in Durham, how many would you say are in a gang? (There are about 64,000 kids total in Durham)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 20-35,000 – 40,000 – 50-70% – 6,500 – 75% – A lot of them, not sure what number – About 70% – Half – More than 2000. – More than half

4	What went through your head when your court counselor asked if you were in a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (Snorts)... It was just like uh, lol. Omg. No. – He asked if I were Crip or Blood and I said no. – I don't look like I'm in a gang. – I mean, with the court counselors like Ms. X, I don't be telling her everything and sometimes I'm lying because I always feel like, they're going to send you back to Broad Street. And so I don't always tell her everything. I know it's wrong, but I don't know... yeah I feel like they'll send you back to Broad Street. – I thought of all the shit I did. And I was like...no. – I wanted to say no. I don't want people to think I'm in a gang... it's a hard life, not knowing what's gonna happen or always thinking that you might get shot. You're always just looking out... it's a hard life. – It was kind of confusing. – Nothing really, I just tell the truth – Nothing, I just told her. It didn't bother me. – Why is he asking me this? I know girls are in gangs but, I mean... do I look like a gang member?
5	What do adults or authorities in Durham not understand about gangs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How seriously they actually take it. They don't realize that they don't care what they have to do to get down. They will do anything. If they have to go through a police force, they'll go through a police force. – Nothing – Some gangs are bad, but it can be a good thing too depending on the people. If it's just fighting that's bad but it's not always like that – The concept. They think you're down, you're just being stupid. But they [gang members] don't look at it as a gang but as a family. – They don't know why people really join a gang. They want to be accepted, or maybe they're not comfortable with themselves – They don't understand that, we don't try to be bad, but it's what the Bloods do to make us look like we bad. – They say it's a bad thing, but it depends on who you hang out with, some people just like to chill, other people be going around robbing people. So it depends on the people. – What a lot of them don't understand is that, like a gang is supposed to be like a family. Every gang I know of, when you join, they say you're coming home. They tell you they're your family, you know they're gonna protect you, stuff like that. That's why a lot of people get down with gangs – Why they're rivals against each other, like people who used to be cool together won't hang out anymore because of the gang – Yeah, they don't understand it's not all about killing. It's not usually about violence. It's a lot about hanging out with your friends too, chilling.
6	What do you think it means to be in a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Basically if someone's shooting or something, or if there's a fight, the gang's got your back no matter what – Do bad stuff, break the law – I don't know – I don't know – I don't know

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I don't know, it's too much work. You have meetings, there's handshakes, you have to get jumped in, then you gotta do all this stuff... – I mean, it's a big choice, it's a way of life, a way you see things. I don't fuck with it, not anymore. I mean I used to be more involved – It means always ready to go, ready to kill for your homies if that's what it takes. And getting money. Being a brother. – Nothing. They join it for respect, protection... or just for the heck of it I guess – The kids coming in saying they're in a gang now, most of them are fake. When you're in a gang you're not supposed to talk about it, you're supposed to be slick like that, but these kids are just all up (waves hands) Crips, Bloods. Man, they're just fake. And then that's how stuff starts to happen, because they're off running their mouth about it.
7	Do you think anything has changed recently with gangs in Durham?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gang handshake – I don't know – I mean some gangs, like some of the black gangs, there are a lot of cliques that aren't colorbanging anymore, they just want to hang out and chill, and just smoke... they're not real. They'll maybe rob some people, maybe shoot some stuff, but they ain't real. Like, if they say they'll shoot they won't shoot. They'll just come at you (gestures) then say, naw man... they're pussies. Weak. – No – They're trying to get harder- throwing up signs, all that. I was in an elementary school for something and I saw those kids throwing up signs. They're recruiting younger, these little kids, for the drug stuff. Because a twelve year old is not going to jail for a long time. A little kid is probably not going to get arrested. Then there's more movement; they're travelling and getting stuff from other places like cocaine and guns. Like there will be a cocaine boom in California, and this one guy's got a cousin there, so then he'll go to California and bring stuff back. Cocaine and guns—you watch, there's going to be a lot of drive-bys, end of this year you'll see it, because they got all this stuff coming in. They're trying to be like, in New York, Philadelphia, they got all this heroin, ecstasy, stuff like that, and they're trying to make Durham like, that. There's people starting new—they call it sets—in different places too, they go to a place and get a new set started. It's people from New York, stuff like that coming to Durham, and they're trying to set up their little sets here. They—so OG's and GF's, they're like the boss. But then they send their second in command to all these places, like if someone has a cousin there or something. But then there's groups of people, little cliques starting up all over the place. Durham... it's getting faster. There's gang members who are raising more gang members, they went and had kids, and now they're raising their kids to be gang members. You watch, there's going to be more gang members, and it's going to spread, to Raleigh, Charlotte, things like that. – Yeah, Bloods and Crips are huge, they be beefin' all the time now. Like GD, and what's that other one-- Boss People-- you don't hear much about them. The only reason GD is still anything is cause of Rick Ross. – Yeah, most gangs now are all little kids, where they used to be all adults. You see like 6th, 7th graders reppin gangs, wearing signs, stuff like that.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Yeah, now neighborhoods will make their own sets. And little kids... it's crazy, I see like little kids, 12, 13 talking about that shit. – Yes- they're more violent. Like don't know much about Bloods and Crips and stuff like that, I know more about the Mexican gangs, but I know there's a lot of blues and reds killing each other. In the Mexican gangs there's a lot more Southsiders and Northsiders fighting... a lot more Southsiders retaliating against Northsiders – Yes. They're getting worse. People are hurting each other more.
8	Without using names, are any of your family members in a gang?	<p>No (3) Yes (5) Did not answer (1)</p>
9	Have you ever had a friend get hurt or killed because of something to do with a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I'll never forget X. I was in 7th—maybe 6th grade? I don't know, it was a long time ago. She was outside on her driveway playing with her little brother, and this car drives by. It was a couple Crips and they were looking. They were supposed to kill someone, and they shot her. Right in front of her little brother, died in her father's arms. I will never forget that. – My cousin got killed cause he was with the Few Crew—it was a long time ago so I don't really remember but my mom told me about it. – My friend—Crip—he got shot, but it wasn't really gang related. Some people tried to rob his house, and they shot him. He was trying to pull his gun, and they got him in the leg, then he shot at some of them. – No – There's a person I know, on the bus, he was talking about wanting to get down on a gang and they beat him off, they was in a different gang and they beat him up bad, then after he was like well at least I'm in, but they was like no you're not you're with the other gang – Yeah. My friend Y. We were walking around with guns, cause the big homie told us we should, for protection, and we were by a playground when I start hearing these shots. So I'm shooting back we're just shooting, then I start to hear— how do I describe it? I don't even know. Like heavy breathing, behind me- and he got shot. And then he died. That was last year- I was 14. I started thinking, "that could have been me" – Yeah. My next door neighbor, he got killed cause, he looked a lot like his brother who was Boss. He was like my best friend, we used to chill all the time, so yeah that hurt a little. – Yeah... well it wasn't like... it was a Northsider and he was at home playing with a gun when he accidentally—his sister walked in and he didn't know it was her and he shot her. Then after they looked around the house and they found like all these signs and stuff – Yes. I don't want to talk about it. – Yes. When I was fourteen. My friend got shot, in a drive-by by a Latin King. I remember, it was like I blacked out for a second. What? What? Naw man, fuck. No. I was so mad, so angry, just wanted to get revenge. We were just in the basement, chilling when we found out, then we were out to get them back.
10a	Have you ever	No (4)

	held or used a gun?	Yes (6)
10b	[If yes] Can you tell me the story of how you got that gun, or the first gun you held if there was more than one?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I got it from my brother. It's easy as long as you know the right people, I mean maybe you go to the wrong guy but he'll try to shave you. [E: How cheap could you get a gun for?] Probably one-fifty. But that'd be a little hand gun, like if you want to get a nine or something with more power, then you'd be at like \$400 or something. But that's another reason why people'll join a gang, cause they'll give you that stuff, guns for free. – I was fourteen. My friend broke into this white person's house, he was like, hey man look at this deuce-deuce- you know a .22- he was like, hey look at this man. Then I borrowed it – It was my relative's. I just grabbed it. They were mad... I was like 11, I was young. They mad cause if I died the shit somebody's saying... – My stepdad took me in the back of the woods to practice shooting and stuff. – Well, I started with bibi guns, at that time I was selling weed. My friend was like, yo you wanna make some money? I had like \$68 at the time, so showed me how, gave me weed. I think I got around \$200 the first time. Then like he said his gun connect was around, so I went and bought one, a .38 revolver. It was \$220, cause I didn't want a gun with bodies on it. [What's the cheapest you can get a gun for?] Well, a lil deuce—you could get it for \$80, \$60 if you know the people...comes with all the ammo and everything. – When I got down, I got my gun. That's how it works. I got mine for free. I know you can get a deuce-deuce for \$50, a .40 for like, \$200. The big guns cost \$600 or \$700, it's really easy. [Could you just go talk to someone right now and get one if you wanted?] (Laughs) Yeah. [How long would it take you?] Not long.
11	Are there any parts of Durham where you do not feel safe for reasons related to gangs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Braggtown – Braggtown, East Durham – Can't go to Cornwallis. Or- what's the name of the other one? Club? No I think it's something Bluefield – MacDougall and Cornwallis – Maybe Cheek Road if I'm by myself – Nah, I go wherever I want, nobody's gonna try and stop me. Me and my homies, we go wherever we want. – No – Not really... I guess maybe I wouldn't go to the Southside a lot because that's Blood and stuff, and Crips are in there too so that's where a lot of stuff happens. – The Mac. Hickstown, where the Crips be. Braggstown, I think it's called, near Lakeview. And close to that university in Chapel Hill... that place looks nice, with all those houses and everything, but after dark you better not go there. – You know the Village by McDonalds? Because there's two groups of people there and it gets kind of...
12	What's one thing that would make your life better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Get off house arrest, that'd be good – Good relationship with my mama – I don't know

	if you could have it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I just think if people want to make their life better they shouldn't focus on what other people say, they should just focus on schoolwork and making their life better. – If I was rich – Money – My dad. – My freedom back – Nothing comes to mind – Winning the lottery
	Non gang member	
13	Do you have friends or classmates that you know are in a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No... well there's some Mexicans that keep talking about Bloods and Crips. – Yeah, a lot. A lot of my friends are in a gang. I go to [X school], there's a lot. – Yeah. Friends, and it runs in the family. – Yes, a lot. Friends and cousins. – Yes. I go to [X school], I have friends in a gang there
14	What gangs do people talk about most at school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Bloods and Crips – Bloods, Crips, MS-13, Folk Nation, NS-14... there's not a lot of kids in them, some Crips and Bloods but mostly they just talk about it. – Crip or Blood mostly, Southside sometimes – I don't know. – Mostly what you hear about now is Bloods and Crips. GD's not even that big anymore, or Boss People – Northside, Southside
15	<p>Has anyone ever tried to get you to join a gang (or more than one gang?)</p> <p>a. What happened?</p> <p>b. Where did this happen?</p> <p>c. Have you seen someone else join a gang?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – My cousin got down with Blood. He had to be in the box for 30 seconds. – No. [Have you seen someone else join?] Yeah, on the school bus. It was kind of funny... this kid just one day, out of nowhere, was all "I'm gonna do it, man I'm gonna go Crip", but like there's supposed to be four people, and then one big homie, and like you supposed to fight back, but this guy just curled up and didn't do anything. – Yeah, my cousin. She's the one who peer pressured me to do stuff. – Yeah. I been in Durham for seven years, and a lot of my friends they started to get down, and my friend was like one day, you want to get down with Crip. He was—like his stepdad or something was the OG so he said he'd bless him in, but he wanted to earn it. And I thought about it and then eventually I said yeah. It started on the bus, I was getting off and before I even got off this kid behind me hits me, so then we're fighting, but then they—not the bus driver, he was just watching—they pull us apart and are like, what is that sneaking, hit a nigga when he's not looking, what is that. Go again. So then we got boxed—they put you in the box, it's like all the people around you, they can hit you, but you're mostly fighting one person. – Yes, Blood and Crip. It was at Lakeview. I just said no cause I knew better. – Yes. It was my friends from the neighborhood, they just asked me like if I wanted to be in the gang. [Have you seen someone else join?] Yeah, my friend fought someone because he wanted to join. He had to fight this one kid, there were a whole bunch of people there.

16	Did you ever consider joining a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – At one point, but not really. All the stuff that’s going on... like I know that if I joined, I would be offin’ people. They would know who I was. But I just don’t want it. – No, I did a lot of shit but never finished. I just, it was too much shit. I guess what made me change my mind was, this one time they took me, dressed me all in blue and dropped me in a Blood neighborhood, then just drove away. Gave me a gun and told me to find my way home. Man, I was nervous. So like I start walking back the way we came, and start to hear someone, like, “hey, you can’t wear those colors here. This is a Blood neighborhood. You can’t wear that round here”, and I was like, “whatever man Imma wear what I want”. And then I see this group of niggas and they start like, “yo take that shit off, you can’t wear blue around here. Take that shit off.” And I’m like, hell no I ain’t stripping. And they start getting pissed, coming up, like they was gonna make me take it off, so I pull my gun and I flashed my gun then they were like, yo man, chill. So I started speeding up, walking faster, then after a couple minutes I hear a car screech and shooting, so I’m running through backs of houses and stuff... that was a crazy day. So I never finished, but I still got some rank from what I did, if I ever wanted to go back. – No, my mom already talked to me about that. – No... I always told myself if I did, I’d be boss. – No... well yes before, but I said no because it’s useless. – Yeah, in 8th grade. I decided not to cause a lot of people think you need a gang for protection, but I don’t think you need a gang. That’s what friends do if they’re real friends.
17	What do you think gangs spend most of their time doing?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Drugs, smoking weed, and fighting... making a scene. They’re instigators, really, they’re instigators. But gangs in Durham, they’re like the weakest gang members ever. You’d think they’d be beefin’ all the time, but they’re all friends, they’re not serious. I mean, I know some real gang members, and they don’t talk about it. – Fighting or smoking – I don’t know – I know they get jumped in, and have big homie and rules and stuff – Mostly they talk about how bad they are – Vandalizing, causing problems... smoking a lot – You know, they talk about shooting and stuff, but a lot of it’s meetings. They have a lot of meetings, then smoke, stuff like that.
18	Why do kids join gangs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Family – I don’t know, trying to figure that out myself. – I think they just want to be accepted – It’s like family – Protection, respect, people to be there when you need them no matter what – Want to be cool.

	Gang-involved	
13	Is being part of a gang an important part of who you are?	No (2) Yes (2)
14	Can you tell me about when you joined?:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I was fourteen, I thought I should be in it because it looked fun, and I thought those guys were cool, and because I used to like to fight a lot. I got beat in, it was outside this storage place so nobody would see – I was thirteen. Can't really tell you what happened, I'm not allowed. – Just get beaten
14a	Did you feel like you wanted to join or had to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I feel like most people want to – I wanted to – I wanted to
14b	Why did you join?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – For money – I wanted to be like those guys. I looked up to them. – Looked fun
14c	Were there other gangs you could have joined?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Never tried – Not really. Some of my family's Crip... there weren't really any other option – Yeah, a bunch of gangs here have asked me to join, because they know I'm real. Like, the Crips asked me just last year, but I was like, now man.
14d	How old were you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Fourteen – Thirteen – Thirteen. Thirteen people start reppin', fourteen they usually get jumped in.
15	What do you mostly do when you're together with other members of the gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Basically get in trouble. We would call up the Bloods and meet them somewhere and fight. [Why?] I dunno, we just wanted to. – Chill, drink, smoke – We mostly talk and chill, smoke, reminisce, I mean if something happens, we're serious. I mean we ain't afraid to shoot somebody, but it's mostly talking
16	What is the best part of being in a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – I guess it's like you can do whatever you want, no rules, unless you own strikes in the gang or something – I really like guns, so that's part of it, cause that's a way you get guns. And respect, it's all about respect. – My friends helping me do stuff, and having my back
17	What is the worst part of being in a gang?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Getting home and dying – Getting jumped. Um, getting shot. Getting violated. I've never been violated, it's usually like if someone drops their flag somewhere or is talking shit. – Got jumped by some Bloods. Happened twice, at school.

18	Could you get out if you wanted to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Depends on the OG. It’s all up to the OG, and then it might not be full out, like they could still call you... most have to stay – I mean, some gangs won’t let you out. I think for my set, you’d only get out by being killed. It’s supposed to be for life. Blood in, blood out. – Yeah I could. You get jumped out.
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A.2. Interviews with court counselors

Interviews were conducted with court counselors in Durham (8 counselors), Forsyth (5), Guilford (4), and Cumberland (3) Counties. A minimum of three court counselor interviews were sought in all counties outside of Durham, all of which were conducted on the same day. A greater number of interviews was conducted if time and counselors’ schedules permitted, as was the case in Guilford and Forsyth.

Interviews were conducted in a location selected by each counselor within the offices of the DACJJ; typically this was his or her personal office. Interviews were designed to take approximately thirty minutes, although actual interview times ranged from ten minutes to sixty-seven minutes. All interviewees signed a consent form prior to completing an interview, and every interview was audio-recorded. Counselors were given the option whether or not to allow their name to be associated with their interview.

Court counselor interview questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your work in juvenile justice?
2. Is gang membership or something you encounter often with the kids you work with?
 - a. Roughly what percentage of your caseload in an average year would you say is gang-involved?
 - b. What about full gang members?
3. As a court counselor, were you required to go through any gang-related trainings?
 - a. Have you undergone any optional trainings?
4. In your experience, is there a practical difference between the label “gang member” and “gang associate” when it comes to youth’s experience in the courts, schools, or other public spaces? (Followup: Does any gang label at all tend to get lumped together?)
5. What are the ways that you usually find out or identify if a child is in a gang?
 - a. Where and how do you record that information?
 - b. Do you share that information with anyone?
 - c. Is there ever a time when you would choose to ignore or not record some sign of gang membership? (ie, due to a perception that the child is wearing a certain article of clothing because it is “cool” rather than to indicate actual gang involvement)
 - d. Are there certain signs you take more seriously than others?
 - e. Have you seen any changes over the past five years in the types of visual identifiers that you encounter most?

6. Do kids ever lie or BS about being in a gang? Either denying involvement, or falsely claiming involvement?
 - a. Which way do you see more often? (Denying or false claiming)
 - b. Why might a child deny involvement? Why might they falsely claim involvement?
7. Have you observed any changes over the past five years in the demographics or backgrounds of children who are identifying as gang-involved? (ie, changes in age, gender, etc)
8. Have you observed any changes over the past five years in the types of activities that juveniles engage in with or because of a gang?
9. Can you tell me what you know about the history of gangs in Durham?
10. Durham law enforcement states that it seeks to focus on crime, not gang membership.
 - a. Do you think this is an accurate description of the law enforcement approach in Durham?
 - b. Do you believe that this is an effective way to reduce crime?
11. Does juvenile gang membership have any negative effects on a community beyond actual crime?
12. Have you seen a strategy that is particularly effective at getting youth out of gangs or reducing the negative effects of gangs?
13. In your experience:
 - a. Why does gang membership appear so high in Durham in the first place, and
 - b. Why might the recorded number of court-involved youth who are gang members or associates be going up?
14. From speaking with your clients, how easy is it to obtain a gun in Durham? What are some common ways that a child might obtain a gun?
15. I will be speaking to court-involved youth. Do you have any advice for talking to kids, or questions I should ask them?

A.3. Interviews with local gang experts and stakeholders

This category of interviewees includes a diverse array of law enforcement officers, representatives of relevant local nonprofits, district court judges, a retired member of the Blood gang, professional gang experts, and city or county employees who work regularly with juvenile gang members. Interviews were tailored to each interviewee's area of expertise, and allowed a large degree of flexibility during the course of the interview based on the idea that interviewees would know more about their area of expertise than the researcher may be prepared even to ask about. All interviewees were required to sign a consent form prior to participating in an interview, and all "expert" interviews were audio-recorded. Interviewees had the option whether or not to allow their name to be attached to their responses.

A.4. Durham Public Schools Survey

The "DPS Perceptions of Gang Presence" survey was disseminated to all DPS middle school and high school teachers and certified staff¹⁰⁶. It was designed by the researcher for primary use in the Update to the Durham Comprehensive Gang Assessment, written by Jim Stuit of the Criminal Justice Resource Center, and secondary use in this thesis. (For purposes of intellectual property this survey is cited through a secondary source and includes only part of the results of the overall survey. However, it was conducted during the period of data collection for this thesis and was designed in part to collect information relevant to this thesis. Therefore additional information about the survey design and questions was deemed

¹⁰⁶ "Certified staff" includes professional staff members in non-teaching positions, such as guidance counselors, school nurses, and school psychologists.

relevant). The survey underwent an extensive review process by the DPS Research and Accountability committee. The final product consisted of 18 questions and took less than 10 minutes to complete. It was distributed through the DPS communication and survey tool K12 Insight in order to guarantee full anonymity of all responses. The survey was sent to 1383 staff and was completed by 541 respondents, for a 39.12% response rate.

Questions with multiple-choice answers were analyzed directly using an excel pivot table. Questions with open-ended responses were coded and analyzed. Full results of the survey may be found in the 2013 Update to the Comprehensive Gang Assessment.

Questions for the DPS Perceptions of Gang Presence Survey

1. Please select all grades with which you work. (Select all that apply).
 - a. 6; 7; 8; 9; 10; 11; 12
2. Do you believe that there are gang members present in your school?
 - a. Yes; No; Don't know/Unsure
3. If you answered yes to question 2, how do you know there are gang members present in your school? Please provide evidence or observations which led to your conclusions.
 - a. Responses vary
4. Do you believe that gang activity is present in your school?
 - a. Yes; No; Don't know/Unsure
5. If you answered yes to question 4, how do you know there is gang activity present in your school? Please provide evidence or observations which led to your conclusions.
6. In my school, gangs are:
 - a. A major problem; A moderate problem; A minor problem; Not a problem; Not present
7. I have been employed at this school for at least five years.
 - a. Yes; No
8. (a) Over the past five years, the number of gang members in my school has:
 - a. Increased; Stayed the same; Decreased; Remained at Zero; Don't know/Not sure
(b) Over the past five years, the level of gang activity on school grounds has:
 - a. Increased; Stayed the same; Decreased; Remained at Zero; Don't know/Not sure
9. In my school, I know which children are gang members.
 - a. Yes; No; Not sure; Not applicable; Gangs are not present in my school
10. What activities do gang members at your school engage in while on school property? Check all that apply.
 - a. Social interaction with other gang members; Skipping class; Fighting; Showing disrespect to teachers; Disrupting class; Recruiting other children; Using illegal substances; Buying or selling illegal substances; Stealing; Smoking; I don't know; There is no gang activity at my school
11. If you are aware of gang activity at your school, **when** does the activity most often occur?
 - a. After school; At lunchtime; Before school; Break between classes; During class time; I don't know; There is no gang activity at my school
12. If you are aware of gang activity at your school, **where** does the activity most often occur?

- a. Bathrooms; Classrooms; Gymnasium or athletic facilities; Hallways; On school buses; Outside on school property; Other (please elaborate); I don't know; There is no gang activity at my school
- 13. How familiar are you with the Durham Public Schools Code of Student Conduct: Gangs and Gang Activities policy?
 - a. Very familiar; Somewhat familiar; Not familiar
- 14. Please comment on your perception of the effectiveness of the Durham Public Schools Code of Student Conduct: Gangs and Gang Activities policy.
 - a. Responses vary
- 15. Current efforts to combat gang activity in my school:
 - a. Exist and are more than adequate; Exist and are adequate; Exist but are inadequate; Do not exist; There is no gang activity in my school
- 16. Please comment on how your school could address gang activity better. Or, if your school already has a good approach, please comment on why this approach works.
 - a. Responses vary.
- 17. From the following, please pick the top three strategies which you think should be implemented to address gangs and gang activity in the Durham community.
 - a. Clean up dilapidated properties; Improve the local school system; Increased involvement of city/county government; Increased involvement of the court system; Increased law enforcement; Increased number of pro-social activities for youth; Increased parental involvement; Better access to mental health services or counseling; Involve community or faith-based groups; Other
- 18. If you selected "other" as a top 3 answer choice in the previous question, please specify.

B. Supplementary Information and Explanations

B.1. North Carolina Standardized Gang Definition and Identification Criteria Checklist

GS 14-50.16(b)

"As used in this Article, "criminal street gang" or "street gang" means any ongoing organization, association, or group of three or more persons, whether formal or informal, that:

- (1) Has as one of its primary activities the commission of one or more felony offenses, or delinquent acts that would be felonies if committed by an adult;
- (2) Has three or more members individually or collectively engaged in, or who have engaged in, criminal street gang activity; and
- (3) May have a common name, common identifying sign or symbol."

NC Standardized Checklist of Gang Identification Criteria

Gang Member Identification Criteria	
Last: _____	First: _____ M.I.: _____ Moniker: _____
DOB: _____	Gang: _____ Subgroup: _____
Validation Status: _____ OCA #: _____	
Previous Validation/Gang Criteria? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N If Yes, OCA & Status: _____	
Date: _____	Investigator: _____ Department: _____
Notes: _____ _____	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Classification Admit: _____	
	In custody Classification interview.	(List name of gang)
	*Note: Classification Admit is automatic member validation.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-Admitted: _____	
	Subject has admitted to being a gang member.	(List gang)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gang Tattoos/ Markings: _____	
	Subject is known to have gang tattoos or markings.	(List and photograph tattoos or marks)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Frequents Gang Areas: _____	
	Subject has been seen frequenting gang areas.	(List gang areas)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Affiliates with Gang Members: _____	
	Subject has been seen affiliating with other documented gang members.	(List known members)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gang Hand Signs/ Symbols: _____	
	Subject has been seen displaying gang symbols/hand signs or writing graffiti.	(List signs or symbols)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gang Terminology or Language: _____	
	Subject uses gang language or terminology.	(List terminology used)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gang Dress: _____	
	Subject has been seen wearing gang dress.	(Example: Gang style, colors, jewelry, bandanas, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Evidence: _____	
	Subject in possession of gang physical evidence or linked via physical evidence.	(Example: Gang documents, photos, graffiti, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reliable Source: _____	
	Subject has been identified as a gang member by a reliable informant/ source.	(List reliable third-party/source)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Untested Source: _____	
	Subject has been identified as a gang member by an untested source.	(List source)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gang Incident: _____	
	Subject has been involved in a criminal gang incident.	(List type of incident, date and report number)

Members require two or more criteria for validation (with the exception of Classification Admit) and must be linked to a gang.
Affiliates require only one criterion, which can be either linked to a person or a gang.

Last Updated: 05/06/2013 Sam Issup

Figure 4: Standardized North Carolina checklist for gang identification. Source: Reck 2013. In italics at the bottom of the sheet, the state provides the following guidance: “Members require two or more criteria for validation (with the exception of Classification Admit) and must be linked to a gang. Affiliates require only one criterion, which can be either linked to a person or a gang.”

B. 2. Flowchart of the North Carolina Juvenile Justice System

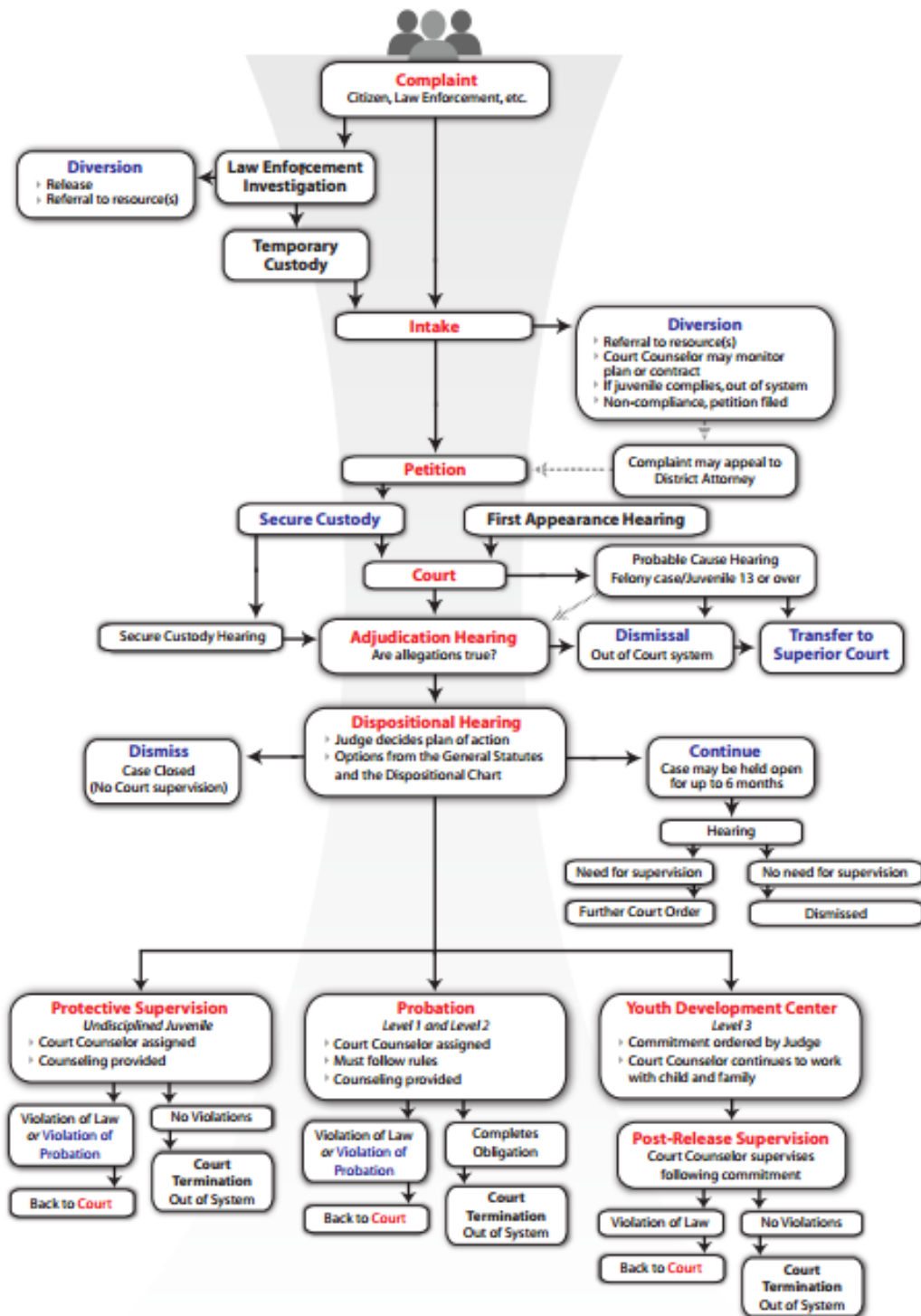


Figure 5: Source: North Carolina Department of Public Safety, <https://www.ncdps.gov/div/JJ/JJdiagram.pdf>

B.3. Articles Published on Gangs and Gang Activity in North Carolina, 2003-2013

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (as of 7/23)
Total # gang-related articles published in NC	37	36	90	58	64	84	52	41	97	85	40
Durham	17	20	26	15	13	8	4	1	7	7	3
% of Total articles about gangs in Durham	45.95 %	55.55 %	28.9 %	25.86 %	20.31 %	9.52 %	7.69 %	2.04 %	7.21 %	8.24 %	7.5%
Statewide			6	1	2	6					
Mecklenburg Co., Charlotte	8	5	14	10	7	10	4	11	11	9	3
Cumberland Co., Fayetteville Fort Bragg			1			2		1	3	4	3
Guilford Co., Greensboro	5	2	1	1	10	9	6	3	4	3	
Wake Co., Raleigh	1	2	20	12	5	18	4	3	8	4	1
New Hanover Co., Wilmington	1		1		1	2	1	1	5	7	4
Forsyth Co., Winston-Salem	1	1		1		2		2	2	3	

Table 6: Articles about gangs and gang activity in North Carolina. Source: <http://www.nationalgangcenter.gov/Gang-Related-News?st=NC>

B.4. Expanded Explanation of Reasons Behind False Flagging vs. Denial

One difficulty with juvenile gang membership data is the fact that children often lie about their gang involvement, or misinterpret the question. 19 out of 20 court counselors across 4 counties stated that juveniles lie about gang involvement, either denying that they are members or claiming membership that they don't truly have. Youth themselves also acknowledged this, and explained various reasons for this behavior. Some said that they were avoiding a gang label, others claimed to be confused by the questions, others did not tell because they assumed it would get them in more trouble. For example, one interviewee said "I mean, with the court counselors like Ms. X, I don't be telling her everything, and sometimes I'm lying, because I always feel like they're going to send you back to Broad Street."¹⁰⁷

As a followup to the question about whether or not children lie about their gang involvement, counselors were asked whether they observe denial or false claiming more often. In Durham, the results show that while children lie in "both directions" about gang involvement (both denying and falsely claiming), 6 out of 8 Durham court counselors interviewed claimed that they see denial more often. In addition, when

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Anonymous Juvenile C

asked to estimate how much of their current caseload was gang-involved, counselors' responses averaged to an estimate that 59.48% of juveniles are gang-involved¹⁰⁸. If we exclude intake counselors, who do not have a regular caseload, this number jumps to 66.38%. The lowest estimate given by a non-intake counselor was one-third of her caseload, which is still higher than the reported rate of 21% involvement.

Interviews with court counselors in key comparison counties indicate that this tendency to underestimate is not unique to Durham, as demonstrated in Table 7. For each of the counties, counselors gave a wide range of estimates for the total number of gang-involved juveniles, but even the lowest estimate was higher than the reported rate of juvenile gang involvement in every case.

County	Reported Rate of Juvenile Gang Involvement in NC-JOIN	Estimates of actual rate of juvenile involvement, from court counselor
Cumberland	6.9%	10.53%; 23.68%; 54.12%
Guilford	7%	7.7%; 30%; 50%
Forsyth	11.8%	15%; 35%; 50%; 60%; 70%

Table 7: Counselor estimates of juvenile gang involvement in regional comparison counties. Source: Interviews with court counselors in Cumberland, Guilford, and Forsyth counties.

In general, both youth and adults interviewed agreed that denial is more common since youth (accurately) perceive that there may be negative repercussions to their identifying as a gang member. According to some court counselors, children who falsely claim gang membership do so because they do not or cannot adequately perceive the consequences of their action, but rather see only the perceived social benefits of such an association. Anecdotally, children who falsely claim membership may tend to be either very young or to have a developmental disorder, though there is not currently data to support this perception¹⁰⁹.

B.5. Comparability of juvenile gang involvement data between counties

Limitations of NC-JOIN gang involvement data outlined in the thesis indicate make it difficult even to observe trends within a single jurisdiction; it is logical that these difficulties would make comparison between different jurisdictions, which likely have a range of variable features between them, extremely imprecise. However, the strongest argument against such a comparison comes not from DACJJ practices, but from differences in law enforcement validation¹¹⁰ practices between counties. While law enforcement data is not a primary or even major source for NC-JOIN data, the degree of leniency or stringency in the validation process provides insight into local political currents which may affect broader attitudes towards gang member identification.

Law enforcement and court counselors across the state use the same checklist to identify gang membership. On this checklist, the state provides the following guideline for recommendation: "Members

¹⁰⁸ Exact responses were: "80%", "at least a third", "80%", "100% gang associated, I'd say about 75% gang members", "75-80%", "about half or more", "I have four cases right now, and none of those are gang-involved", "50-60%". Responses given as a range were averaged into one number before being calculated into the overall average above. I.e., "50-60%" was entered into the overall average as 55%.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Anonymous court counselor I, Durham DACJJ

¹¹⁰ Validation is the process by which police record and enter gang involvement into a database and is based on a standardized checklist of twelve criteria. These same criteria are utilized across multiple agencies (including law enforcement and the Division of Adult Correction and Juvenile Justice) and across the state. See appendix for a full list of the validation criteria.

require two or more criteria for validation (with the exception of Classification Admit) and must be linked to a gang. Affiliates require only one criterion, which can be either linked to a person or a gang.” However, the actual implementation of these criteria varies between counties. Interviews with law enforcement representatives in each of the comparison counties yielded the following threshold number of criteria required for local validation:

County	Typical number of validation criteria used
Durham	1-3 criteria (state recommended)
Cumberland	3-4 criteria
Forsyth	Unable to speak with law enforcement <i>However, court counselors in this jurisdiction report that Forsyth law enforcement may interpret “gang-related” crime only by the more stringent motive-based metric, which would dramatically reduce gang crime rates</i>
Guilford	At least 3 criteria

Table 8: Validation practices in Durham and comparison counties. Sources: Cumberland: Interview with Chris Kempf, Fayetteville Police Department, Forsyth: Interview with anonymous court counselor, Forsyth DACJJ. Guilford: Interview with Jeanette Dockery, Greensboro Police Department. Durham: Interviews with multiple law enforcement officers